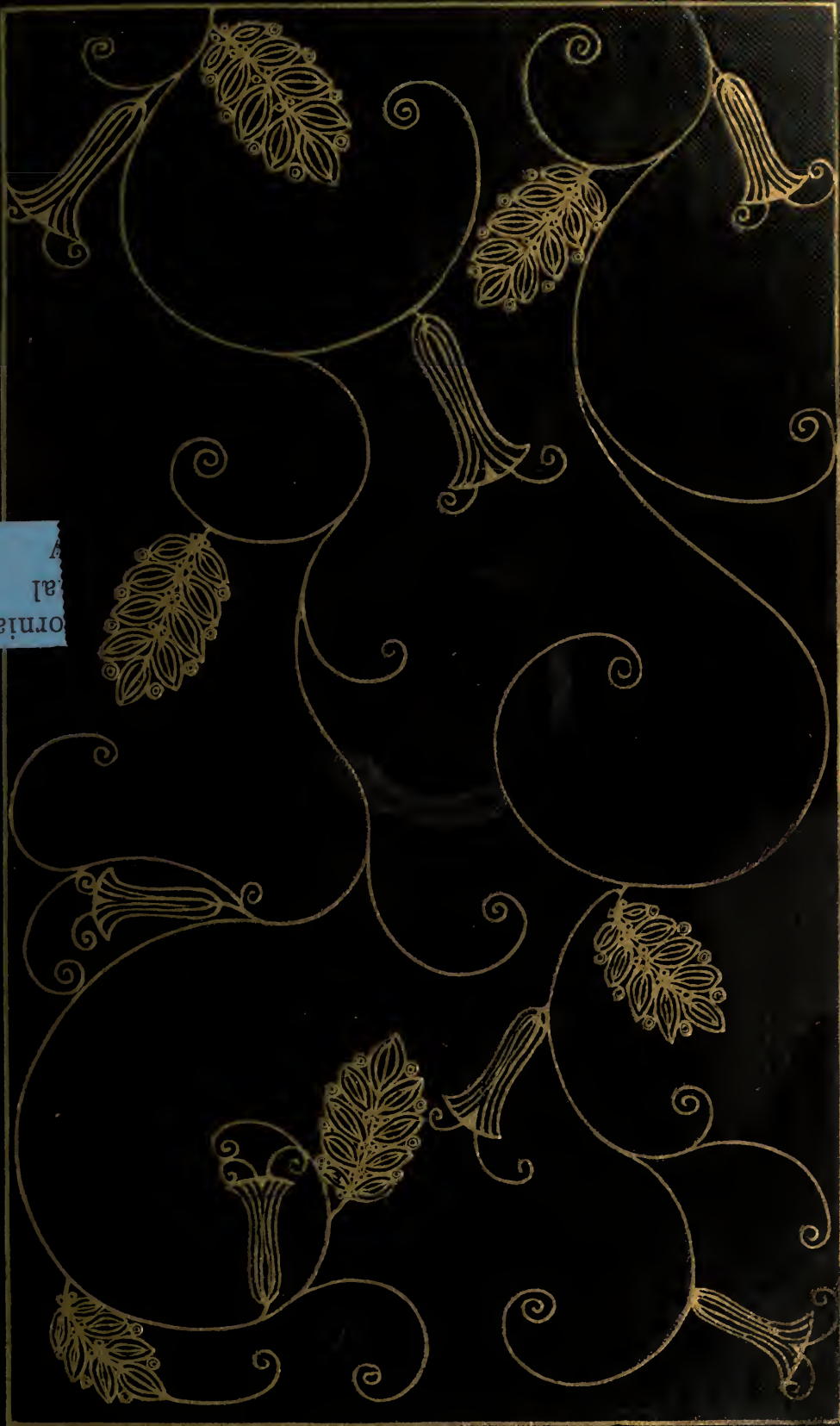


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Lives of  
Fair and Gallant Ladies

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VOLUME II



Lives  
of  
Fair and Gallant Ladies  
By  
The Seigneur De Brantôme

TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL

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VOLUME II

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Printed by the  
The Alexandrian Society, Inc.  
London and New York  
1922



**Marguerite of Valois**

*From an old engraving.*

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## INTRODUCTION

**T**HE Mondragola of Machiavelli, which reflects Italian morals at the time of the Renaissance, is well known. Lafontaine has later made use of this motif in one of his humorous stories. In the fourth chapter Liguro arrays in battle order an officer, a valet and a doctor, for a humorous love expedition. Liguro says: "In the right corner we shall place Callimaque; I shall place myself in the extreme left corner, and the doctor in the middle. He will be called St. Cuckold."

An interlocutor: "Who is this Saint?"

"The greatest Saint of France."

This question and the answer given are delicious. Brantôme might have made this witticism even in his time. Perhaps he merely did not write it down, for after all he could not make too extensive use of his favorite play with the word "cocu."

"The cuckold, the greatest Saint of France"; this might have been the motto of the "Dames Galantes." Philarete Chasles would have denied this, of course. He always maintained that Gaul was pure and chaste, and that if France was full of vice, it had merely been infected by neighboring peoples. But this worthy academician was well informed merely regarding Italian influence. He was extremely unaware of the existence of the cuckold in the sixteenth century. He even asserts in the strongest terms (in his preface to the edition of 1834) that all of this had not been so serious; the courtiers had merely desired to be immoral in an elegant fashion. He even calls Brantôme "un fanfaron de licence," a braggart of vice. Indeed he would feel unhappy if he could not reassure us: "Quand il se plonge dans les im-

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puretes, c'est, croyez-moi, pure fanfaronnade de vice." Who would not smile at this worthy academician who has remained so unfamiliar with the history of his kings? His "believe me" sounds very well. But the best is yet to come. The book of the "Dames Galantes" was by no means to be considered merely a frivolous collection of scandalous anecdotes, but a "curious historical document."

There will probably always be a difference of opinion regarding Brantôme's position in the history of civilization. It will probably be impossible to change the judgments of the ordinary superficial reader. But we do not wish to dispose of Brantôme as simply as that. It is very easy for a Puritan to condemn him. But we must seek to form a fairer judgment. Now in order to overcome this difficulty, it is, of course, very tempting simply to proclaim his importance for the history of civilization and to put him on the market as such. This would not be wrong, but this method has been used altogether too freely, both properly and improperly. Besides, Brantôme is too good to be labelled in this manner. He does not need it either, he is of sufficient historical importance even without its being pointed out. The question now arises: From what point of view are we then to comprehend Brantôme? We could answer, from the time in which he lived. But that, speaking in such general terms, is a commonplace. It is not quite correct either. For in spite of the opinions of the educated we must clearly distinguish between Brantôme as an author and Brantôme as a man—and we shall hear more of this bold anarchistic personality, who almost throws his chamberlain's key back at the king. This is another striking case where the author must by no means be identified with his book. These events might have passed through another person's mind; they would have remained the same nevertheless. For Brantôme did not originate them, he merely chronicled them. Now it usually happens that things are attributed to an author of which he is entirely innocent (does not Society make an author pay for his con-

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fessions in book-form?). He is even charged with a crime when he merely reports such events. The responsibility which Brantôme must bear for his writings is greatly to be limited. And if our educated old maids simply refuse to be reconciled with his share we need merely tell them that this share is completely neutralized by his own personal life.

Brantôme undoubtedly considered himself an historian. That was a pardonable error. There is a great difference of opinion regarding the historical value of his reports, the most general opinion being that Brantôme's accuracy is in no way to be relied upon, and that he was more a chronicler and a writer of memoirs. To be sure, Brantôme cannot prove the historical accuracy of every statement he makes. Who would be able to give an exact account of this kaleidoscope of details? But the significance, the symbolic value is there.

In order to substantiate this sharp distinction between the book of *Fair and Gallant Ladies* and the supposed character of its author, I must be permitted to describe France of the sixteenth century. Various essayists have said that this period had been quite tame and pure in morals, that Brantôme had merely invented and exaggerated these stories. But when they began to cite examples, it became evident that their opinion was like a snake biting its own tail. Their examples proved the very opposite of their views.

Brantôme's book could only have been written at the time of the last of the Valois. These dissolute kings furnished material for his book. Very few of these exploits can be charged to his own account, and even these he relates in an impersonal manner. Most of them he either witnessed or they were related to him, largely by the kings themselves. No matter in what connection one may read the history of the second half of the sixteenth century, the dissolute, licentious and immoral Valois are always mentioned. The kings corrupted this period to such an extent that Brantôme would have had to be a Heliogabalus in order to make his own contributions felt.



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At the beginning of this period we meet with the influence of the Italian Renaissance. Through the crusades of Charles VIII., France came into close contact with it. These kings conducted long wars for the possession of Milan, Genoa, Siena and Naples. A dream of the South induced the French to cross the Alps, and every campaign was followed by a new flood of Italian culture. If at the beginning of the sixteenth century France was not yet the Capital of grand manners, it approached this condition with giant strides during the reign of Francis I. For now there was added an invasion of Spanish culture. Next to Rome, Madrid had the greatest influence upon Paris. Francis I., this chivalrous king (1515-1547), introduced a flourishing court life. He induced Italian artists such as Leonardo and Cellini to come to Blois and try to introduce the grand Spanish manners into his own court. For a time France still seemed to be an imitation of Italy, but a poor one. With the preponderance of the Spanish influence the Etiquette of Society approached its perfection.

Francis I. therefore brought knighthood into flower. He considered a nobleman the foremost representative of the people and prized chivalry more than anything else. The court surrendered itself to a life of gaiety and frivolity; even at this period the keeping of mistresses became almost an official institution. "I have heard of the king's wish," Brantôme relates, "that the noblemen of his court should not be without a lady of their heart and if they did not do as he wished he considered them simpletons without taste. But he frequently asked the others the name of their mistresses and promised to help and to speak for them. Such was his kindness and intimacy." Francis I. is responsible for this saying: "A court without women is like a year without a spring, like a spring without roses." To be sure, there was also another side to this court life. There were serious financial troubles, corruption in administration and sale of offices. The Italian architects who constructed the magnificent buildings of Saint

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Germain, Chantilly, Chambord and Chenonceaux were by no means inexpensive. Great interest was also taken in literary things. A more refined French was developed at this period. In Blois a library, *Chambre de Libraye*, was established. All of the Valois had great talent in composing poetic epistles, songs and stories, not merely Marguerite of Navarre, the sister of Francis I., who following the example of her brother was a patroness of the arts. To be sure, mention is also made of the "terrifying immorality" in Pau, even though this may not have been so bad. Brantôme is already connected with this court life in Pau. His grandmother, Louise of Daillon, Seneschal of Poitiers, was one of the most intimate ladies-in-waiting of the Queen of Navarre. His mother, Anne of Bourdeille, is even introduced in several stories of the *Heptameron*. She is called Ennasuite, and his father Francis of Bourdeille appears as Simontaut. Life in the Louvre became more and more lax. Francis I., this royal Don Juan, is even said to have been a rival of his son, without our knowing, however, whether this refers to Catherine of Medici or to Diana of Poitiers. Another version of the story makes Henri II. a rival of his father for the favor of Diana of Poitiers. But the well known revenge of that deceived nobleman which caused the death of Francis I. was entirely unnecessary. It is said that the king had been intentionally infected. He could not be healed and died of this disease. At any rate, his body was completely poisoned by venereal ulcers, when he died. This physical degeneration was a terrible heritage which he left to his son, Henri II. (1547-1550).

The latter had in the meantime married Catherine of Medici. Italian depravities now crossed the Alps in even greater numbers. She was followed by a large number of astrologers, dancers, singers, conjurors and musicians who were like a plague of locusts. She thus accelerated the cultural process, she steeped the court of Henri II. as well as that of his three sons in the spirit of Italy and Spain. (The numerous citations of Brantôme indicate the frequency and closeness of

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relations at this time between France and Spain, the classical country of chivalry.) But her greed for power was always greater than her sensual desires. Though of imposing exterior, she was not beautiful, rather robust, ardently devoted to hunting, and masculine also in the quantity of food she consumed. She talked extremely well and made use of her literary skill in her diplomatic correspondence, which is estimated at about 6,000 letters. She was not, however, spared the great humiliation of sharing the bed and board of her royal husband with Madame de Valentinois, Diana of Poitiers, the mistress of Henri II. In this difficult position with an ignorant and narrow-minded husband who was moreover completely dominated by his favorites, she maintained a very wise attitude. Catherine of Medici was, of course, an intriguing woman who later tried to carry out her most secret purposes in the midst of her own celebrations.

Henri II. had four sons and a daughter, who were born to him by Catherine of Medici after ten years of sterility. In them the tragic fate of the last of the Valois was fulfilled. One after the other mounts the throne which is devoid of any happiness. The last of them is consumed when he has barely reached it. The blood of the Valois would have died out completely but for its continuation in the Bourbons through Marguerite, the last of the Valois, who with her bewitching beauty infatuated men and as the first wife of Henri IV. filled the world with the reports of her scandalous life. There is tragedy in the fact that the book of *Fair and Gallant Ladies* was dedicated to Alençon, the last and youngest of the Valois. Of these four sons each was more depraved than the other; they furnished the material for Brantôme's story. The book of *Fair and Gallant Ladies*, therefore, also seals the end of the race.

The line began with Francis II. He mounted the throne when he was a boy of sixteen. He was as weak mentally as he was physically. He died in 1560, less than a year later, "as a result of an ulcer in the head." Then Catherine of



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Medici was Regent for ten years. In 1571 the next son, Charles, was old enough to mount the throne. He was twenty-two years old, tall and thin, weak on his legs, with a stooping position and sickly pale complexion. Thus he was painted by François Clouet, called Janet, a famous painting which is now in possession of the Duke of Aumale. While a young prince, he received the very best education. His teachers were Amyot and Henri Estienne, with whom he read Plotin, Plato, Virgil, Cicero, Tacitus, Polybius and Machiavelli. Amyot's translation of Plutarch's Lives delighted the entire court. "The princesses of the House of France," Brantôme relates, "together with their ladies-in-waiting and maids-of-honor, took the greatest pleasure in the sayings of the Greeks and Romans which have been preserved by sweet Plutarch." Thus literature came into its own even in this court life. But they did not merely do homage to the old classical literature, all of them were also versed in the art of the sonnet, and were able to rhyme graceful love songs as well as Ronsard. Charles IX. himself wrote poetry and translated the Odes of Horace into French. His effeminate nature, at one moment given to humiliating excesses and in the next consumed by pangs of conscience, was fond of graceful and frivolous poetry. But there was also some good in this movement. Whereas the French language had been officially designated in 1539 as the Language of Law, to be used also in lectures, Charles IX. now gave his consent in 1570 for the founding of a Society to develop and purify the language. But even in this respect the honest de Thou denounced "this depraved age" and spoke of "the poisoning of women by immoral songs." This worthy man himself wrote Latin, of course. A time of disorder was now approaching, the revolts of the Huguenots were sweeping through France. But these very disorders and dangers encouraged a certain bold carelessness and recklessness. Murder was slinking through the streets. It was the year of St. Bartholomew's Eve. The Duke of Anjou himself relates that he feared to be stabbed by his own brother king, Charles

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IX., and later when he himself mounted the throne his brother Alençon was in conspiracy against him. The Mignons and the Rodomonts, the coxcombs and braggarts, were increasing at this depraved court. Soon it was able seriously to compete with Madrid and Naples. Indeed the people down there now began to look up to France as the centre of fashion. Brantôme was the first to recognize this and he was glad of it. Indeed he even encouraged it. Even at that time the Frenchman wished to be superior to all other people.

The king was completely broken by the results of St. Bartholomew's Eve. His mind wandered back and forth. He became gloomy and vehement, had terrible hallucinations, and heard the spirits of the dead in the air. By superhuman exertions he tried to drown his conscience and procure sleep. He was constantly hunting, remaining in the saddle continuously from twelve to fourteen hours and often three days in succession. When he did not hunt he fenced or played ball or stood for three to four hours at the blacksmith's anvil swinging an enormous hammer. Finally, consumption forced him to stay in bed. But even now he passed his time by writing about his favorite occupation, he was composing the *Livre du Roy Charles*, a dissertation on natural history and the deer hunt. When he reached the twenty-ninth chapter death overtook him. This fragment deserves praise, it was well thought out and not badly written.

It is always unpleasant to say of a king that he had more talent to be an author than a king. It is unfortunate but true that the Valois were a literary race. But France itself in 1577 was in a sorry state. Everywhere there were ruins of destroyed villages and castles. There were enormous stretches of uncultivated land and cattle-raising was greatly diminished. There were many loafing vagabonds accustomed to war and robbery who were a danger to the traveller and the farmer. Every province, every city, almost every house was divided against itself.

Francis of Alençon, the fourth of these brothers, who felt



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himself coming of age, the last of the Valois, had already begun his agitation. Charles IX. despised him and suspected his secret intrigues. His other brother, Henri, had to watch his every step in order to feel secure.

Henri III. (1574-1589), formerly Henri of Anjou, was barely twenty-five years old when his strength was exhausted. But his greed of power which had already made him king of the Polish throne was still undiminished. He was the most elegant, the most graceful and the most tasteful of the Valois. It was therefore only to be expected that he would introduce new forms of stricter etiquette. D'Aubigne relates that he was a good judge of the arts, and that he was "one of the most eloquent men of his age." He was always on the search for poetry to gratify his erotic impulses. A life of revelry and pleasure now began in the palace. Immorality is the mildest reproach of his contemporary chroniclers. Although well educated and a friend of the Sciences, of Poetry and the Arts, as well as gifted by nature with a good mind, he was nevertheless very frivolous, indifferent, physically and mentally indolent. He almost despised hunting as much as the conscientious discharge of government affairs. He greatly preferred to be in the society of women, himself dressed in a feminine fashion, with two or three rings in each ear. He usually knew what was right and proper, but his desires, conveniences and other secondary matters prevented him from doing it. He discharged all the more serious and efficient men and surrounded himself with insignificant coxcombs, the so-called Mignons, with whom he dallied and adorned himself, and to whom he surrendered the government of the state. These conceited young men, who were without any redeeming merit, simply led a gay life at the court. In his *History of France* (I, 265), Ranke relates: "He surrounded himself with young people of pleasing appearance who tried to outdo him in cleanliness of dress and neatness of appearance. To be a favorite, a Mignon, was not a question of momentary approval but a kind of permanent position." Assassinations

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were daily occurrences. D'Aubigne severely criticized the terrifying conditions in the court and public life in general. A chronicler says: "At that time anything was permitted except to say and do what was right and proper." This frivolous, scandalous court consumed enormous sums of money. Such a miserable wretch as Henri III. required for his personal pleasures an annual sum of 1,000,000 gold thalers, which is equivalent to about \$10,000,000 in present values, and yet the entire state had to get along with 6,000,000 thalers. For this was all that could be squeezed out of the country. Ranke says (page 269): "In a diary of this period, the violent means of obtaining money and the squandering of the same by the favorites are related side by side, and it shows the disagreeable impression that these things made." Then there was also the contrast between his religious and his worldly life. At one time he would steep his feelings in orgies, then again he would parade them in processions. He was entirely capable of suddenly changing the gayest raiment for sackcloth and ashes. He would take off his jewel-covered belt and put on another covered with skulls. And in order that Satan might not be lacking, the criminal court ("chambre ardente") which was established at Blois had plenty of work to do during his reign. It was also evident that he would never have any children with his sickly wife.

This same Henry III. while still Duke of Orleans tried to gain the favor of Brantôme, who was then twenty-four years old, and when he entered upon his reign appointed him his chamberlain. This appointment took place in 1574. At the same time, however, Francis of Alençon sought his favor. Subsequently Brantôme entered into very intimate relations with him.

Alençon is described to us as being small though well built but with coarse, crude features, with the temper and irritability of a woman and even greater cowardliness, likewise unreliable, ambitious and greedy. He was a very vain, frivolous person without political or religious convictions. From his youth

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up he was weak and sickly. His brother Henri despised and hated him and kept him a barely concealed prisoner as long as he could. Then Alençon revolted, gathered armies, founded a new Ultra-Royal party and moved on Paris. He even wished at one time to have his mother removed from the court, who was still carrying on her intrigues throughout the entire kingdom. They were obliged to negotiate with him and he succeeded in extorting an indemnity which was almost equal to a royal authority. He received five duchies and four earldoms and his court had the power of passing death sentences. He had a guard and a corps of pages in expensive liveries and conducted a brilliant court. We must try and picture him as Ranke describes him, "small and stocky, of an obstinate bearing, bushy black hair over his ugly pock-marked face, which, however, was brightened by a fiery eye."

The book of *Fair and Gallant Ladies* is dedicated to Alençon, but he did not see it any more. Brantôme, however, must have begun it while he was still living. Alençon died in 1584 at the age of thirty-one.

Five years later Henri III. was stabbed by Jacques Clement. Thus the race of Henri III., which was apparently so fruitful, had withered in his sons. The remaining sister, who was inferior according to the Salic Law, was also extremely immoral.

Her husband, Henry IV., entered a country that was completely exhausted. The state debt at the time he entered upon his reign clearly showed the spirit of the previous governments. In 1560 the state debt was 43,000,000 livres. At the end of the century it had risen to 300,000,000. The Valois sold titles and dignities to the rich, squeezed them besides and were finally capable of mortgaging anything they could lay their hands upon. In 1595 Henri IV. remarked in Blois that "the majority of the farms and almost all the villages were uninhabited and empty." This mounting of the state debt clearly indicates the extent of the depravity of the court. During the reign of Charles IX. and Henri III., that



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is between 1570-1590, the dissoluteness reached its height and this made it possible for Brantôme to collect such a large number of stories and anecdotes. Catherine of Medici, who outlived her race by a year and whose influence continued during this entire period, does not seem to have been a saint herself. But the last three of the Valois were the worst, the most frivolous and lascivious of them all. It was during their reign that the rule of mistresses was at its height in the Louvre and the royal castles which furnished Brantôme with his inexhaustible material. Such were the Valois.

This is the background of Brantôme's life. We should like to know more about him. He has written about many generals and important women of his age, but there are only fragments regarding himself.

The family Bourdeille is one of the most important in Périgord. Like other old races they sought to trace their ancestors back into the times of Gaul and Rome. Charlemagne is said to have founded the Abbey Brantôme.

Brantôme's father was the "first page of the royal litter." His son speaks of him as "un homme scabreaux, haut a la main et mauvais garçon." His mother, a born Châtaigneraie, was lady-in-waiting of the Queen of Navarre. Pierre was probably also born in Navarre, but nothing is known as to the exact day of birth. Former biographers simply copied, one from the other, that he had died in 1614 at the age of eighty-seven. This would make 1528 the year of his birth. But now it is well known that Brantôme spent the first years of his life in Navarre. Queen Marguerite died in 1549 and Brantôme later writes of his sojourn at her court: "Moy estant petit garçon en sa court." Various methods of calculation seem to indicate that he was born in 1540.

After the death of the Queen of Navarre—this is also a matter of record—Brantôme went to Paris to take up his studies. From Paris, where he probably also was a companion of the *enfants sanssouci*, he went to Poitiers to continue them. There in 1555, while still "a young student,"

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he became acquainted with the beautiful Gotterelle, who is said to have had illicit relations with the Huguenot students. When he had completed his studies in 1556 he as the youngest son had to enter the church. He also received his share of the Abbey Brantôme from Henri II. as a reward for the heroisms of his older brother. This young abbot was about sixteen years old. His signature and his title in family documents in this period are very amusing: "Révérend père en Dieu abbé de Brantôme." As an abbot he had no ecclesiastical duties. He was his own pastor, could go to war, get married and do as he pleased. But nevertheless, this ecclesiastical position did not suit him, and so he raised 500 gold thalers by selling wood from his forests with which he fitted himself out and then went off to Italy at the age of eighteen: "Portant L'coquebuse a meche et un beau fournement de Milan, monte sur une haquenee de cent ecus et menant toujours six on sept gentils hommes, armes et montes de meme, et bien en point sur bons courtands."

He simply went off wherever there was war. In Piedmont he was shot in the face by an arrow which almost deprived him of his sight. There he was lying in Portofino in these marvellously beautiful foothills along the Genoese coast, and there he was strangely healed: "Une fort belle dame de la ma jettait dans les yeux du lait de ses beaux et blancs tetins" (*Vies des Capitaines français*, Ch. IV, 499). Then he went to Naples with François de Guise. He himself describes his reception by the Duke of Alcala. Here he also became acquainted with Madame de Guast, die Marquise del Vasto.

In 1560 he left Italy and took up the administration of his estates which heretofore had been in the hands of his oldest brother, Andre. He joined the court in Amboise, where Francis II. was conducting tournaments. At the same time the House of Guise took notice of him. In recollection of his uncle, La Châtaigneraie, he was offered high protection at the court of Lorraine. From this time on he was at the court

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for over thirty years. At first he accompanied the Duke of Guise to his castle. Then after the death of Francis II. he accompanied his widow, Mary Stuart, to England in August, 1561, and heard her final farewell to France.

Although Brantôme could not say enough in praise of the princes of Lorraine, the Guises, he did not go over to their side. Once at a later period when he was deeply embittered he allowed himself to be carried away by them. At the outbreak of the civil wars, Brantôme, of course, sided with the court. He also participated in the battle of Dreux. If there happened to be no war in France he would fight somewhere abroad. In 1564 he entered into closer relations with the court of the Duke of Orleans (later Henri III.). He became one of his noblemen and received 600 livres annually. (The receipts are still in existence.) In the same year he also took part in an expedition against the Berbers on the Coast of Morocco. We find him in Lisbon and in Madrid, where he was highly honored by the courts. When Sultan Soliman attacked Malta, Brantôme also hurried thither. He returned by way of Naples and again presented himself to the Marquise de Guast. He thought that at last he had found his fortune but he felt constrained to continue his journey. He later denounces this episode in the most vehement terms. "*Toujours trottant, traversant et vagabondant le monde.*" He was on his way to a new war in Hungary, but when he arrived in Venice he heard that it was not worth while. He returned by way of Milan and Turin, where he gave the impression of being greatly impoverished, but he was too proud to accept the purse of the Duchess of Savoy.

In the meantime, the Huguenots had forced the king to make greater and greater concessions. Prince Condé and Admiral Coligny had the upper hand. The Huguenots, who heard that Brantôme had reasons to be displeased with the king, tried to induce him to commit treason. But Brantôme remained firm. He was given the title Captain ("Maître de camp") of two companies even though he only had one—but.



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that is typical of the French. This company (*enseigne*) was under his command in the Battle of St. Venis (1567). In the following year, 1568, Charles IX. engaged him as a paid chamberlain. After the Battle of Jarnac in the following year he was seized by a fever, as a result of which he had to spend almost a year on his estates in order to recover.

As soon as he was well again he wished to go off to war somewhere. He complained that it had been impossible for him to participate in the Battle of Lepanto. His friend, Strozzi, was now getting ready an expedition to Peru, which was to recompense him. But some misunderstanding caused his separation from Strozzi shortly afterwards. The preparations for this expedition had, however, kept him away from St. Bartholomew's Eve, even though later he cursed them for personal reasons.

Brantôme was not religious. He cannot be considered a good judge in affairs of the Huguenots, for he was more than neutral in religious matters. He took an indifferent attitude towards the League. For as a secular priest, he had the very best reasons for being neither in favor of the League nor of the Huguenots. He speaks with great respect of Coligny. They frequently met and the admiral was always friendly. Brantôme disapproved of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew's Eve and considered it entirely reprehensible and purposeless. This good warrior would have greatly preferred to have seen these restless spirits engaged in a foreign war. He says of this bloody eve: "*Mort malheureuse lu puis-je bien appeller pour toute la France.*" To be sure, in the following year he was present at the Siege of La Rochelle, the White City.

He was at the court when Charles IX. died. He accompanied the corpse from Notre Dame to St. Denis and then entered the services of Henri III., who finally bestowed some favors upon the brothers Bourdeille and gave them the Bishopric of Périgueux.

Then this restless soul was driven to approach Alençon,

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the youngest of the Valois. Bussy d'Amboise, the foremost nobleman of Alençon, was his friend. Alençon overwhelmed him with kindness and Brantôme had to beg the angry king's pardon for his defection.

But now an event occurred which almost drove Brantôme into open rebellion. In 1582 his oldest brother died. The Abbey had belonged to both of them, but his brother had appointed his own heir and the king was helpless against this. Brantôme became very angry because he was not the heir. "Je ne suis qu'un ver de terre," he writes. He now desired that the king should at least give his share of the Abbey to his nephew, but he was unsuccessful in this as well. Aubeterre became Seneschal and Governor of Perigord. This fault-finder could not control his anger: "Un matin, second jour de premier de l'an . . . je luy en fis ma plainte; il m'en fit des excuses, bien qu'il fust mon roy. Je ne luy respondis autre chose sinon: Eh bien, Sire, vous ne m'avez donne se coup grand subject de vous faire jainais service comme j'ay faict." And so he ran off "fort despit." As he left the Louvre he noticed that the golden chamberlain's key was still hanging on his belt; he tore it off and threw it into the Seine, so great was his anger.

(When Aubeterre died in 1593 these posts were returned to the family Bourdeille.)

(Other reasons which angered Brantôme were less serious. Thus he could not bear Montaigne because the latter was of more recent nobility. He himself has shown that a man of the sword could very well take up the pen to pass the time. But he could not understand that the opposite might happen, and a sword given to a man of the pen. He was appointed a knight in the Order of St. Michael. But this did not satisfy his ambition very much when he looked around and saw that he had to share this distinction with many other men. He wished to have it limited to the nobility of the sword. Now his neighbor, Michel de Montaigne, received the same order. Brantôme writes regarding this: "We have seen councillors



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leave the courts of justice, put down their robe and their four-cornered hat and take up a sword. Immediately the king bestowed the distinction upon them without their ever having gone to war. This has happened to Monsieur de Montaigne, who would have done better to remain at his trade and continue to write his essays rather than exchange his pen for a sword which was not nearly so becoming.”)

Henri II. pardoned him his unmannerly behavior, but the king's rooms were closed to him. Then the Duke of Alençon wished to gain his allegiance and appointed him chamberlain, thereby rewarding him for the intimate relationship which had existed between them ever since 1579. The duke was the leader of the dissatisfied and so this fault-finder was quite welcome to him. The book of Fair and Gallant Ladies is the direct result of the conversations at the Court of Alençon, for we hear that Brantôme soon wrote a few discourses which he dedicated to the prince. Brantôme sold himself to Alençon, which is almost to be taken literally. Then Alençon died. Brantôme's hopes were now completely crushed.

What was he to do now? He was angry at the king. His boundless anger almost blinded him. Then the Guises approached him and tried to induce him to swear allegiance to the enemies of the Valois. He was quite ready to do this and was at the point of committing high treason, for the King of Spain was behind the Guises, to whom he swore allegiance. But the outbreak of the war of the Huguenots, which resulted in a temporary depreciation of all estates, prevented him from carrying out his plans immediately. He could not sell anything, and without money life in Spain was impossible. But this new state of affairs gave him new energy and new life. He walked about with “sprightly vigor.” He later described his feelings in the *Capitaines français* (Ch. IV, 108): “Possible que, si je fusse venu an bout de vies attantes et propositions, J'eusse faut plus de mal a ma patrie que jamais n'a faict renegat d'Alger a'la sienne, dont J'en fusse

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este mandict a perpetuite, possible de Dieu et des hommes."

Then a horse that he was about to mount, shied, rose up and fell, rolling over him, so that all his ribs were broken. He was confined to his bed for almost four years; crippled and lame, without being able to move because of pain.

When he was able to rise again the new order of things was in full progress, and when the iron hand of Henri IV., this cunning Navarrese and secret Huguenot, swept over France, the old court life also disappeared. Brantôme was sickly and when the old Queen-mother Medici also died (1590) he buried himself completely in his abbey and took no interest henceforth in the events of his time.

"Chaffoureur du papier"—this might be the motto of his further life. Alas, writing was also such a resignation for Brantôme, otherwise he would not have heaped such abuse upon it. But we must not imagine that his literary talent only developed after his unfortunate fall. Naturally he made quite different and more extensive use of it under these conditions than he otherwise would have done. Stirring up his old memories became more and more a means of mastering the sterile life of that period. Literature is a product of impoverished life. It is the opium intoxication of memory, the conjuring up of bygone events. The death-shadowed eyes of Alençon had seen the first fragments of the book of Fair and Gallant Ladies. The *Rondomontades Espagnoles* must have been finished in 1590, for he offered them to the Queen of Navarre in the Castle of Usson in Auvergne. But beginning in 1590 there was a conscious exchange of the sword for the pen. He knew himself well. On his bed of pain the recollections of his varied life, his sufferings and the complaints of his thwarted ambitions became a longed-for distraction. He died July 15, 1614, and was buried in the Chapel of Richemond.

His manuscripts had a strange fate. They were the principal care of his last will and testament. This in itself is a monument to his pride. "J'ai bien de l'ambition," he writes,

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"je la veux encore monstrier apres ma mort." He had decided elements of greatness. The books in his library were to remain together, "set up in the castle and not to be scattered hither and thither or loaned to anyone." He wished to have the library preserved "in eternal commemoration of himself." He was particularly interested in having his works published. He pretended to be a knight, and a nobleman, and yet he prized most highly these six volumes beautifully bound in blue, green and black velvet. His books, furthermore, were not to be published with a pseudonym, but his own name was to be openly printed on the title-page. He does not wish to be deprived of his labors and his fame. He gave the strictest instructions to his heirs, but he was constantly forced to make additions to the will, because his executors died. He outlived too many of them and had made his will too early. The instructions regarding the printing of his books are very amusing: "Pour les faire imprimer mieux a ma fantaisie, . . . y'ordonne et veut, que l'on prenne sur ma lotate heredite l'argent qu'en pourra valoir la dite impression, et qui ne se pourra certes monter a beaucoup, cur j'ay veu force imprimeurs . . . que s'ils ont mis une foys la veue, en donneront plusoost pour les imprimer qu'ils n'en voudraient recepvair; car ils en impriment plusierus gratis que no valent pas les mieux. Je m'en puy bien vanter, mesmes que je les ay monstrez au moins en partie, a aucuns qui les ont voulu imprimer sans rien. . . . Mais je n'ay voulu qu'ils fussent imprimez durant mon vivant. Surtout, je veux que la dicte impression en soit en belle et gross lettre, et grand colume, pour mieux paroistre. . . ." The typographical directions are quite modern. The execution of the will finally came into the hands of his niece, the Countess of Duretal, but on account of the offence that these books might give, she hesitated to carry out the last will of her uncle. Then his later heirs refused to have the books published, and locked the manuscripts in the library. In the course of time, however, copies came into circulation, more and more copies were made, and



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one of them found its way into the office of a printer. A fragment was smuggled into the memoirs of Castelnau and was printed with them in 1659. A better edition was now not far off. In 1665 and 1666 the first edition was published in Leyden by Jean Sambix. It comprised nine volumes in Elzevir. This very incomplete and unreliable edition was printed from a copy. Speculating printers now made a number of reprints. A large number of manuscripts were now in circulation which were named according to the copyists. In the 17th and 18th centuries these books were invariably printed from copies. The edition of 1822, *Oeuvres complètes du seigneur de Brantôme* (Paris: Foucault), was the first to go back to the original manuscripts in possession of the family Bourdeille. Monmergue edited it. The manuscript of the book of Fair and Gallant Ladies was in the possession of the Baroness James Rothschild as late as 1903. After her death in the beginning of 1904, it came into possession of the National Library in Paris, which now has all of Brantôme's manuscripts, and also plans to publish a critical revised edition of his collected works.

The two books, *Vies des Dames illustres* and *Vies des Dames galantes*, were originally called by Brantôme Premier and Second Livre des Dames. The new titles were invented by publishers speculating on the taste of the times, which from 1660-1670 greatly preferred the words illustre and galante. The best subsequent edition of the Fair and Gallant Ladies is that printed by Abel Ledoux in Paris, 1834, which was edited by Philarete Chasles, who also supplied an introduction and notes. On the other hand, the critical edition of his collected works in 1822 still contains the best information regarding Brantôme himself, and the remarks by the editor Monmergue are very excellent and far superior to the opinions which Philarete Chasles expresses, poetic as they may be. The crayon-drawings and copper-cuts of Famous and Gallant Ladies of the sixteenth century contained in Bouchot's book, *Les femmes de Brantôme*, are very good; Bouchot's text,

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however, is merely a re-hash of Brantôme himself. Neither must one over-estimate his reflections regarding the author of the *Fair and Gallant Ladies*.

There is a great difference between the two *Livres des Dames*. What is an advantage in the one is a disadvantage in the other. Undoubtedly Brantôme's genius is best expressed in the *Dames Galantes*. In this book the large number of symbolical anecdotes is the best method of narration. In the other they are more or less unimportant. Of course, Brantôme could not escape the questionable historical methods of that period, but shares these faults with all of his contemporaries. Besides, he was too good an author to be an excellent historian. The devil take the historical connection, as long as the story is a good one.

The courtier Brantôme sees all of history from the perspective of boudoir-wit. Therefore his portraits of famous ladies of his age are mere mosaics of haphazard observations and opinions. He is a naïve story-teller and therefore his ideas are seldom coherent. The value of his biographical portraits consists in the fact that they are influenced by his manner of writing, that they are the result of scandal and gossip which he heard in the Louvre, or of conversations in the saddle or in the trenches. He always preserves a respectful attitude and restrains himself from spicing things too freely. He did not allow himself to become a purveyor of malicious gossip, he took great care not to offend his high connections by unbridled speech, but his book lost interest on that account.

If we wish to do justice to Brantôme as the author of *Fair and Gallant Ladies*, we must try and picture his position in his age and in his society. It is not to be understood that he suddenly invented all of these stories during his long illness. Let us try and follow the origin of these memoirs. At that time the most primitive conceptions of literary work in general prevailed. The actual writing down of the stories was the least. An author laboriously working out his stories

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was ridiculous. The idea and the actual creative work came long before the moment when the author sat down to write. None of Brantôme's stories originated in his abbey, but in Madrid, in Naples, in Malta before La Rochelle, in the Louvre, in Blois and in Alençon. Writing down a story was a reproduction of what had already been created, of what had been formed and reformed in frequent retelling and polished to perfection. The culture of the court was of great aid to him in his style, but his own style was nevertheless far superior.

For decades Brantôme was a nobleman of his royal masters. He was constantly present at the court and participated in all of the major and minor events of its daily life, in quarrels and celebrations. He was a courtier. He was entirely at home in the halls and chambers of the Louvre, but even though he stopped to chat with the idle courtiers in the halls of the Louvre he never lowered himself to their level. He could be extremely boisterous, yet inwardly he was reserved and observant. He was the very opposite of the noisy, impetuous Bussy-Rabutin. His intelligence and his wisdom made him a source of danger among the chamberlains. His was a dual nature, he was at the same time cynical and religious, disrespectful and enthusiastic, refined and brutal, at the same time abbot, warrior and courtier. Like Bernhard Palissy he ridiculed the astrologers, yet he was subject to the superstitions of his age. His temperament showed that his cradle had not been far from the banks of the Garonne, near the Gascogne. There was combined with his bold, optimistic, adventurous and restless spirit, with his chivalrous ideas and prejudices, a boundless vanity. A contemporary said of him: "He was as boastful as Cellini." Indeed he believed himself far superior to his class, he not only boasted of himself and his family, but also of his most insignificant deeds. He was irreconcilable in hate, and even admonished his heirs to revenge him. His royal masters he treated with respect tempered by irony. As a contemporary or Rabelais, Marot and Ronsard, he was an



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excellent speaker. If Rabelais had a Gallic mind then Brantôme's was French. His cheerful and lively conversation was pleasing to all. He had a reputation of being a brilliant man. But he was also known as a discreet person. Alençon, who was a splendid story-teller himself and liked to hear love stories more than anything else, preferred conversation with him to anyone. His naïveté and originality made friends for him everywhere. He had a brave and noble nature and was proud of being a Frenchman, he was the personified *gentilhomme français*.

And thus his book originated. He must have taken up his pen quite spontaneously one day. Now from the great variety of his own experiences at court and in war, he poured forth a remarkable wealth of peculiar and interesting features which his memory had preserved. It is a book of the love-life during the reign of the Valois. These stories were not invented, but they were anecdotes and reports taken from real life. He was able to evade the danger of boredom. There is style even in his most impudent indiscretions. He only stopped at mere obscenities. On the other hand, he never hesitated to be cynical. As this age was fond of strong expressions, a puritanical language was out of the question. Not until the reign of Louis XIV. did the language become more polite. Neither was Brantôme a Puritan, how could he have been? But he had character. He took pleasure in everything which was a manifestation of human energy. He loved passion and the power to do good or evil. (To be sure he also had some splendid things to say against immoderacy and vehemence of passions. So he was a fit companion of the Medici and the Valois.)

There is not much composition in his books. His attention wandered from one story to the other. Boccaccio, the foremost story-teller of this period, is more logical. An academical critic says of Brantôme: "He reports without choice what is good and bad, what is noble and abominable, the good not without warmth, but the bad with indestructible cheerful-

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ness." There is neither order nor method in his writing. He passes on abruptly, without motif, without transition. A courtier, unfamiliar with the rules of the school, he himself confesses (in the *Rodomontades Espagnoles*): "Son pen de profession du scavoir et de l'art de bien dire, et remet aux meux disans la belle disposition de paroles eloquentes." Because of the variety his stories have unusual charm. In these numerous anecdotes the graceful indecencies of the ladies-in-waiting at the court of the Valois are described as if they had happened openly. His reports of the illicit relations are rendered in a charming style. Even though his sketches and pictures are modelled entirely on the life at the courts, nevertheless he adds two personal elements: an amusing smile and a remarkable literary talent. The following may even have been the case. In the beginning Brantôme may have taken an entirely neutral attitude towards the material at hand, but took no greater personal interest in them than he would, say, in memoirs. But when we can tell a story well, then we also take pleasure in our ability. We permeate the story with our own enjoyment, and in a flash it turns out to be pleasure in the thing itself. The light of our soul glows upon them and then the things themselves look like gold. Brantôme rarely breaks through his reserve. He usually keeps his own opinions regarding these grand ladies and gentlemen in the background, he leaves it to the competent "grands discoureurs" to judge these things. To be sure, if one wished to get information regarding the court of Henri II. and Catherine of Medici, one ought not exactly to read Brantôme, who creates the impression as if the court were a model of a moral institution. "Sa compaignie et sa court estait un vray paradis du monde et escole de toute honnestate, de vertu, l'ornement de la France," he once says somewhere in the *Dames illustres* (page 64). On the other hand, L'Etorle in May, 1577, gives us a report of a banquet given by the Queen-mother in Chenonceaux: "Les femmes les plus belles et honnestes de la cour, estant a moitie nues et ayant, les cheveux epars comme espou-



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sees, furent employees a faire le service." Other contemporaries likewise report a great deal of the immorality prevailing at the court. Thus we have curious reports regarding the pregnancy of Limeuil, who had her birth-throes in the queen's wardrobe in Lyon (1564), the father being the Prince of Conde. Likewise, Johanna d'Albret warns her son, later Henri IV., against the corruption of the court. When she later visited him in Paris she was horrified at the immorality at the court of her daughter-in-law, later Queen Margot, who lived in the "most depraved and dissolute society." (Bran-tôme pretended that he was a relative of hers, and pronounced a panegyric upon her in his *Rodomontades* which was answered in her memoirs dedicated to him.) He did not feel it his mission to be a Savonarola. To his great regret this "culture" came home to him in his own family. He had more and more cause to be dissatisfied with his youngest sister, Madeleine. The wicked life of this lady-in-waiting filled him with fury. He paid her her share and drove her from the house.

Certain Puritans among the historians find fault with Brantôme for having uncovered the "abominations" at the courts of the Valois. His vanity may have led him to make many modifications in the events, but most of these are probably due to his desire to be entertaining. In his dedication to the *Rodomontades Espagnoles* he addresses Queen Margot as follows: "Bien vous dirai-je, que ce que j'escris est plein de verite; de ce que j'ay veu, je l'asseure, di ce que j'ay seen et appris d'autray, si on m'a trompe je n'en puis mais si tiens-je pourtant beaucoup de choses de personnages et de livres tres-veritables et dignes de foy." Nevertheless, his method was very primitive. In his descriptions of personalities, he had a thread on which he could string up his recollections, so that there was at least some consistency. In the book of Fair and Gallant Ladies the individual fact is of less importance and has more of symbolic value. They are pictures of the time composed of a confusing multitude of anecdotes.

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Perhaps the subject-matter required this bizarre method. The *Heptameron* of Marguerite of Navarre was altogether too precise. Brantôme was a man of the sword and a courtier, but a courtier who occasionally liked to put his hand on his sword in between his witticisms. In this state of mind, he was an excellent story-teller, and his anecdotes and stories therefore also have the actuality and the vigorous composition of naïvely related stories.

The book of Fair and Gallant Ladies still contains much of historical value. Almost all the old noble races are mentioned; there is information regarding Navarre, Parma, Florence, Rome and Toulouse. The Huguenots likewise appear, and St. Bartholomew's Eve (1572), which was far back, still sheds its gloom over these pages. The trenches before La Rochelle play an important part; Brantôme always fought against the Huguenots. Perhaps this was the reason why he was no longer in favor with the Bourbon Henri IV. However, one cannot charge him with animosity. Perhaps the frank and open methods of reforming had affected him. Without taking interest in religious quarrels, he probably also hated the monks and priests. Thus one would be inclined to say to the Puritans who condemn Brantôme: If one may speak of guilt and responsibility, then it is his age which must bear them. Brantôme merely chronicled the morals of his times. The material was furnished to him, he merely wrote it down. He is no more responsible for his book, than an editor of a newspaper for the report of a raid or a bomb attack. Ranke once said regarding the times of Henri II.: "If one wishes to know the thoughts and opinions of France at that period, one must read Rabelais" (History of France, Ch. I, 133). Whoever wishes to become familiar with the age of Charles IX. and Henri III. must read Brantôme.

GEORG HARSDÖRFER.

(Translated from the German.)

**LIVES OF FAIR AND  
GALLANT LADIES**





## FIFTH DISCOURSE

Telling how fair and honourable ladies do love brave and valiant men, and brave men courageous women.

### 1.

**I**T hath ever been the case that fair and honourable ladies have loved brave and valiant men, albeit by natural bent they be cowardly and timid creatures. But such a virtue doth valour possess with them, as that they do grow altogether enamoured thereof. What else is this but to constrain their exact opposite to love them, and this spite of their own natural complexion? And for an instance of this truth, Venus, which in ancient days was the goddess of Beauty, and of all gentle and courteous bearing, being fain, there in the skies and at the Court of Jupiter, to choose her some fair and handsome lover and so make cuckold her worthy husband Vulcan, did set her choice on never a one of the pretty young gallants, those dapper, curled darlings, whereof were so many to hand, but did select and fall deep in love with the god Mars, god of armies and warlike prowess,—and this albeit he was all foul and a-sweat with the wars he had but just come from, and all besmirched with dust and as filthy as might



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be, more smacking of the soldier in the field than the gallant at Court. Nay! worse still, very oft mayhap all bloody, as returning from battle, he would so lie with her, without any sort of cleansing of himself or scenting of his person.

Again, the fair and high-born Penthesilea, Queen of the Amazons, having learned of fame concerning the valour and prowess of the doughty Hector, and his wondrous feats of arms which he did before Troy against the Greeks, did at the mere report of all this grow so fondly enamoured of the hero, that being fain to have so valiant a knight for father of her children, her daughters to wit which should succeed to her kingdom, she did hie her forth to seek him at Troy. There beholding him, and contemplating and admiring his puissance, she did all ever she could to find favour with him, not less by the brave deeds of war she wrought than by her beauty, the which was exceeding rare. And never did Hector make sally upon his foes but she would be at his side, and was always as well to the front as Hector himself in the mêlée, wherever the fight was hottest. In such wise that 'tis said she did several times accomplish such deeds of daring and so stir the Trojan's wonder as that he would stop short as if astonished in the midst of the fiercest combats, and so withdraw somewhat on one side, the better to see and admire this most valiant Queen doing such gallant deeds.

Thereafter, we leave the world to suppose what was the issue of their love, and if they did put the same in practise; and truly the result could not long be doubtful. But any way, their pleasure was to be of no great duration for the Queen, the better to delight her lover, did so constantly rush forth to confront all hazards, that she

was slain at last in one of the fiercest and fellest encounters. Others however say she did never see Hector at all, but that he was dead before her arrival. So coming on the scene and learning his death, she did thereupon fall into so great grief and such sadness to have lost the goodly sight she had so fondly desired and had come from so far a land to seek, that she did start forth to meet a voluntary death in the bloodiest battles of the war; and so she died, having no further cause to live, now she had failed of beholding the gallant being she had chosen as best of all and had loved the most.<sup>1</sup>

The like was done by Thalestris, another Queen of the Amazons, who did traverse a great country and cover I know not how many leagues for to visit Alexander the Great, and asking it of him as a favour, or as but a fair exchange of courtesy, did lie with him in order that she might have issue by him of so noble and generous a blood, having heard him so high rated of all men. This boon did Alexander very gladly grant her; and verily he must needs have been sore spoiled and sick of women if he had done otherwise, for the said Queen was as beautiful as she was valiant. Quintus Curtius, Orosius and Justin do affirm moreover that she did thus visit Alexander with three hundred ladies in her suite, all bearing arms, and all so fair appavelled and of such a beauteous grace as that naught could surpass the same. So attended, she did make her reverence before the King, who did welcome her with the highest marks of honour. And she did tarry thirteen days and thirteen nights with him, submitting herself in all ways to his good will and pleasure. At the same time she did frankly tell him how that if she had a daughter by him, she would guard her as

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a most priceless treasure; but an if she had a son, that she would send him back to the King, by reason of the abhorrence she bear to the male sex, in the matter of holding rule and exercising any command among them, in accordance with the laws introduced in their companies after they had slain their husbands.

Herein need we have no doubt whatever but that the rest of the ladies and attendant dames did after a like manner, and had themselves covered by the different captains and men of war of the said King Alexander. For they were bound in this matter to follow their mistress' example.

So too the fair maiden Camilla, at once beautiful and noble-hearted, and one which did serve her mistress Diana right faithfully in the woodlands and forests on her hunting parties, having heard the bruit of Turnus' valiance, and how he had to do with another valiant warrior, to wit Aeneas, which did press him sore, did choose her side. Then did she seek out her favourite and join him, but with three very honourable and fair ladies beside for her comrades, the which she had taken for her close friends and trusty confidantes,—and for tribads too mayhap, and for mutual naughtiness. And so did she hold these same in honour and use them on all occasions, as Virgil doth describe in his *Æneid*. And they were called the one Armia, a virgin and a valiant maid, another Tullia, and the third Tarpeia, which was skilled to wield the pike and dart, and that in two divers fashions, be it understood,—all three being daughters of Italy.

Thus then did Camilla arrive with her beauteous little band (as they say "little and good") for to seek out Turnus, with whom she did perform sundry excellent feats

of arms; and did sally forth so oft and join battle with the doughty Trojans that she was presently slain, to the very sore grief of Turnus, who did regard her most highly, as well for her beauty as for the good succour she brought. In such wise did these fair and courageous dames seek out brave and valiant heroes, succouring the same in their ways and encounters.

What else was it did fill the breast of poor Dido with the flame of so ardent a love, what but the valiance she did feel to be in her Aeneas,—if we are to credit Virgil? For she had begged him to tell her of his wars, and the ruin and destruction of Troy, and he had gratified her wish,—albeit to his own great grief, to renew the memory of such sorrows, and in his discourse had dwelt by the way on his own valiant achievements. And Dido having well marked all these and pondered them in her breast, and presently declaring of her love to her sister Anna, the chiefest and most pregnant of the words she said to her were these and no other: “Ah! sister mine, what a guest is this which hath come to my Court! Oh! the noble way he hath with him, and how his very carriage doth announce him a brave and most valiant warrior, in deed and in spirit! I do firmly believe him to be the offspring of some race of gods; for churlish hearts are ever cowardly of their very nature.” Such were Dido’s words; and I think she did come to love him so, quite as much because she was herself brave and generous-hearted, and that her instinct did push her to love her fellow, as to win help and service of him in case of need. But the wretch did deceive and desert her in pitiful wise,—an ill deed he should never have done to so honourable a lady, which had given him



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her heart and her love, to him, I say, that was but a stranger and an outlaw.

Boccaccio in his book of *Famous Folk which have been Unfortunate*,<sup>2</sup> doth tell a tale of a certain Duchess of Forli, named Romilda, who having lost husband and lands and goods, all which Caucan, King of the Avarese, had robbed her of, was constrained to take refuge with her children in her castle of Forli, and was therein besieged by him. But one day when he did approach near the walls to make a reconaissance, Romilda who was on the top of a tower, saw him and did long and carefully observe him. Then seeing him so handsome, being in the flower of his age, mounted on a fine horse and clad in a magnificent suit of mail, and knowing how he was used to do many doughty deeds of war, and that he did never spare himself any more than the least of his soldiers, she did incontinently fall deeply enamoured of the man, and quitting to mourn for her husband and all care for her castle and the siege thereof, did send him word by a messenger that, if he would have her in marriage, she would yield him up the place on the day their wedding should be celebrated.

King Caucan took her at her word. Accordingly the day agreed upon being come, lo! she doth deck herself most stately as a duchess should in her finest and most magnificent attire, which did make her yet fairer still to look on, exceeding fair as she was by nature. So having come to the King's camp for to consummate the marriage, this last, to the end he might not be blamed as not having kept his word, did spend all that night in satisfying the enamoured duchess's desires. But the next morning, on rising, he did have a dozen Averese soldiers of his called,



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## LIVES OF FAIR AND GALLANT LADIES

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such as he deemed to be the strongest and most stalwart fellows, and gave Romilda into their hands, to take their pleasure of her one after other. These did have her for all a night long so oft as ever they could. But then, when day was come again, Caucan having summoned her before him, and after sternly upbraiding her for her wantonness and heaping many insults upon her, did have her impaled through her belly, of which cruel treatment she did presently die. Truly a savage and barbarous act, so to mishandle a fair and honourable lady, instead of displaying gratitude, rewarding her and treating her with all possible courtesy, for the good opinion she had showed of his generosity, valour and noble courage, and her love for him therefor! And of this must fair ladies sometimes have good heed; for of these valiant men of war there be some which have so grown accustomed to killing and slashing and savagely plying the steel, that now and again it doth take their humour to exercise the like barbarity on women. Yet are not all of this complexion, but rather, when honourable ladies do them this honour to love them and hold their valour in high esteem, they do leave behind in camp their fury and fierce passions, and in court and ladies' chambers do fit themselves to the practise of all gentleness and kindness and fair courtesy.

Bandello in his *Tragic Histories*<sup>3</sup> doth relate one, the finest story I have ever read, of a certain Duchess of Savoy, who one day coming forth from her good town of Turin, did hear a Spanish woman, a pilgrim on her road to Loretto to perform a vow, cry out and admire her beauty and loudly declare, how that if only so fair and perfect a lady were wedded to her brother, the Señor de Mendoza, which was himself so handsome, brave and valiant, folk

might well say in all lands that now the finest and handsomest couple in all the world were mated together. The Duchess who did very well understand the Spanish tongue, having graven these words in her breast and pondered them over in her heart, did anon begin to grave love in the same place likewise. In such wise that by this report of his merits she did fall so passionately in love with the Señor de Mendoza as that she did never slacken till she had planned a pretended pilgrimage to St. James of Compostella, for to see the man for whom she had so suddenly been smit with love. So having journeyed to Spain, and taken the road passing by the house of de Mendoza, she had time and leisure to content and satisfy her eyes with a good sight of the fair object she had chosen. For the Señor de Mendoza's sister, which was in the Duchess' train, had advised her brother of so distinguished and fair a visitor's coming. Wherefore he did not fail to go forth to meet her in gallant array, and mounted on a noble Spanish horse, and this with so fine a grace as that the Duchess could not but be assured of the truth of the fair report which had been given her, and did admire him greatly, as well for his handsome person as for his noble carriage, which did plainly manifest the valiance that was in him. This she did esteem even more highly than all his other merits, accomplishments and perfections, presaging even at that date how she would one day mayhap have need of his valour,—as truly in after times he did excellently serve her under the false accusation which Count Pancalier brought against her chastity. Natheless, though she did find him brave and courageous as a man of arms, yet for the nonce was he a recreant in love; for he did show himself so cold and respectful toward her as to try never an

assault of amorous words, the very thing she did most desire, and for which she had undertook her journey. Wherefore, in sore despite at so chilling a respect, or to speak plainly such recreancy in love, she did part from him on the morrow, not near so well content as she had come.

Thus we see how true 'tis that ladies do sometimes love men no less which are bold in love than they which be brave in arms,—not that they would have them brazen and over-bold, impudent and self-satisfied, as I have known some to be. But in this matter must they keep ever the *via media*.

I have known not a few which have lost many a good fortune with women by reason of such over-respectfulness, whereof I could tell some excellent stories, were I not afeared of wandering too far from the proper subject of my Discourse. But I hope to give them in a separate place; so I will only tell the following one here.

I have heard tell in former days of a lady, and one of the fairest in all the world, who having in the like fashion heard a certain Prince given out by repute for brave and valiant, and that he had already in his young days done and performed great exploits of war, and in especial won two great and signal victories against his foes,<sup>4</sup> did conceive a strong desire to see him; and to this end did make a journey to the province wherein he was then tarrying, under some pretext or other that I need not name. Well! at last she did set forth; and presently,—for what is not possible to a brave and loving heart?—she doth gain sight of him and can contemplate him at her ease, for he did come out a long distance to meet her, and doth now receive her with all possible honour and respect, as was

meet for so great, fair and noble-hearted a Princess. Nay! the respect was e'en *too* great, some do say; for the same thing happened as with the Señor de Mendoza and the Duchess of Savoy, and such excessive respectfulness did but engender the like despite and dissatisfaction. At any rate she did part from him by no means so well satisfied as she had come. It may well be he would but have wasted his time without her yielding one whit to his wishes; but at the least the attempt would not have been ill, but rather becoming to a gallant man, and folk would have esteemed him the better therefor.

Why! what is the use of a bold and generous spirit, if it show not itself in all things, as well in love as in war? For love and arms be comrades, and do go side by side with a single heart, as saith the Latin poet: "Every lover is a man of war, and Cupid hath his camp and arms no less than Mars." Ronsard hath writ a fine sonnet hereanent in the first book of his "Amours."

## 2.



HOWEVER to return to the fainness women do display to see and love great-hearted and valiant men,—I have heard it told of the Queen of England, Elizabeth, the same which is yet reigning at this hour, how that one day being at table, entertaining at supper the Grand Prior of France, a nobleman of the house of Lorraine, and M. d'Anville, now M. de Montmorency and Constable of France, the table discourse having fallen among divers other matters on the merits of the late King Henri II. of France, she did commend that Prince most highly, for that he was



so brave, and to use her own word so *martial* a monarch, as he had manifested plainly in all his doings. For which cause she had resolved, an if he had not died so early, to go visit him in his Kingdom, and had actually had her galleys prepared and made ready for to cross over into France, and so the twain clasp hands and pledge their faith and peaceable intent. "In fact 'twas one of my strongest wishes to see this hero. I scarce think he would have refused me, for," she did declare, "my humour is to love men of courage. And I do sore begrudge death his having snatched away so gallant a King, at any rate before I had looked on his face."

This same Queen, some while after, having heard great renown of the Duc de Nemours for the high qualities and valour that were in him, was most eager to enquire news of him from the late deceased M. de Rendán<sup>1</sup> at the time when King Francis II did send him to Scotland to conclude a peace under the walls of Leith,<sup>2</sup> which was then besieged by the English. And so soon as he had told the Queen at length all the particulars of that nobleman's high and noble deeds and merits and points of gallantry, M. de Rendán, who was no less understanding in matters of love than of arms, did note in her and in her countenance a certain sparkle of love or at the least liking, as well as in her words a very strong desire to see him. Wherefore, fain not to stay her in so excellent a path, he did what he could to find out from her whether, if the Duke should come to see her, he would be welcome and well received. She did assure him this would certainly be so, from which he did conclude they might very well come to be wed.

Presently being returned to the Court of France from



off his embassy, he did report all the discourse to the King and M. de Nemours. Whereupon the former did command and urge M. de Nemours to agree to the thing. This he did with very great alacrity, if he could come into so fine a Kingdom by the means of so fair, so virtuous and noble a Queen.

As a result the irons were soon in the fire. With the good means the King did put in his hands, the Duke did presently make very great and magnificent preparations and equipments, both of raiment, horses and arms, and in fact of all costly and beautiful things, without omitting aught needful (for myself did see all this) to go and appear before this fair Princess, above all forgetting not to carry thither with him all the flower of the young nobility of the Court. Indeed Greffier, the Court fool, remarking thereupon did say 'twas wondrous how all the gay *pease blossom* of the land was going overseas, pointing by this his jape at the wild young bloods of the French Court.

Meantime M. de Lignerolles, a gentleman of much adroitness and skill, and at that time an high favourite with M. de Nemours, his master, was despatched to the said fair Princess, and anon returned bearing a most gentle answer and one very meet to content him, and cause him to press on and further hasten his journey. And I remember me the marriage was held at Court to be as good as made. Yet did we observe how all of a sudden the voyage in question was broke off short and never made, and this in spite of a very great expenditure thereon, now all vain and useless.

Myself could say as well as any man in France what 'twas did lead to this rupture; yet will I remark thus much only in passing:—It may well be other loves did

more move his heart, and held him more firm a captive. For truly he was so accomplished in all ways and so skilful in arms and all good exercises, as that ladies did vie with each other in running after him. So I have seen some of the most high-spirited and virtuous women which were ready enough to break their fast of chastity for him.

We have, in the *Cent Nouvelles* of Queen Marguerite of Navarre, a very excellent tale of that lady of Milan, which having given assignation to the late M. de Bonnivet, since that day Admiral of France, one night, did charge her chamber-women to stand with drawn swords in hand and to make a disturbance on the steps, just as he should be ready to go to bed. This they did to great effect, following therein their mistress' orders, which for her part did feign to be terrified and sore afraid, crying out 'twas her husband's brothers which had noted something amiss, and that she was undone, and that he should hide under the bed or behind the arras. But M. de Bonnivet, without the least panic, taking his cloak round the one arm and his sword in the other hand, said only: "Well, well! where be they, these doughty brothers, which would fright me or do me hurt? Soon as they shall see me, they will not so much as dare look at the point of my sword." So saying, he did throw open the door and sally forth, but as he was for charging down the steps, lo! he did find only the women and their silly noise, which were sore scared at sight of him and began to scream and confess the whole truth. M. de Bonnivet, seeing what was toward, did straight leave the jades, commending them to the devil, and hying him back to the bedchamber, shutteth to the door behind him. Thus did he betake him to his lady once more, which did then fall a-laughing and

a-kissing of him, confessing how 'twas naught but a trick of her contriving, and declaring, an if he had played the poltroon and had not shown his valiance, whereof he had the repute, that he should never have lain with her. But seeing he had proved him so bold and confident of heart, she did therefore kiss him and frankly welcome him to her bed. And all night long 'twere better not to enquire too close what they did; for indeed she was one of the fairest women in all Milan, and one with whom he had had much pains to win her over.

I once knew a gallant gentleman, who one day being at Rome to bed with a pretty Roman lady, in her husband's absence, was alarmed in like wise; for she did cause one of her waiting women to come in hot haste to warn him the husband was hunting round. The lady, pretending sore amazement, did beseech the gentleman to hide in a closet, else she was undone. "No, no!" my friend made answer, "I would not do that for all the world; but an if he come, why! I will kill him." With this he did spring to grasp his sword; but the lady only fell a-laughing, and did confess how she had arranged it all of set purpose to prove him, to see what he would do, if her husband did threat him with hurt, and whether he would make a good defence of his mistress.

I likewise knew a very fair lady, who did quit outright a lover she had, because she deemed him a coward; and did change him for another, which did in no way resemble him, but was feared and dreaded exceedingly for his powers of fence, being one of the best swordsmen to be found in those days.

I have heard a tale told at Court by the old gossips, of a lady which was at Court, mistress of the late M. de

Lorge,<sup>s</sup> that good soldier and in his younger days one of the bravest and most renowned captains of foot men of his time. She having heard so much praise given to his valour, was fain, one day that King Francis the First was showing a fight of lions at his Court, to prove him whether he was so brave as folk made out. Wherefore she did drop one of her gloves in the lions' den, whenas they were at their fiercest; and with that did pray M. de Lorge to go get it for her, an if his love of her were as great as he was forever saying. He without any show of surprise, doth take his cloak on fist and his sword in the other hand, and so boldly forth among the lions for to recover the glove. In this emprise was fortune so favourable to him, that seeing he did all through show a good front and kept the point of his sword boldly presented to the lions, these did not dare attack him. So after picking up the glove, he did return toward his mistress and gave it back to her; for the which she and all the company there present did esteem him very highly. But 'tis said that out of sheer despite at such treatment, M. de Lorge did quit her for ever, forasmuch as she had thought good to make her pastime of him and his valiance in this fashion. Nay! more, they say he did throw the glove in her face, out of mere despite; for he had rather an hundred times she had bid him go break up a whole battalion of foot soldiery, a matter he was duly trained to undertake, than thus to fight beasts, a contest where glory is scarce to be gained. At any rate suchlike trials of men's courage be neither good nor honourable, and they that do provoke the same are much to be blamed.

I like as little another trick which a certain lady did play her lover. For when he was offering her his service,



assuring her there was never a thing, be it as perilous as it might, he would not do for her, she taking him at his word, did reply, "Well! an if you love me so much, and be as courageous as you say, stab yourself with your dagger in the arm for the love of me." The other, who was dying for love of her, did straight draw his weapon, ready to give himself the blow. However I did hold his arm and took the dagger from him, remonstrating and saying he would be a great fool to go about it in any such fashion to prove his love and courage. I will not name the lady; but the gentleman concerned was the late deceased M. de Clermont-Tallard the elder, which fell at the battle of Montcontour, one of the bravest and most valiant gentlemen of France, as he did show by his death, when in command of a company of men-at-arms,—a man I did love and honour greatly.

I have heard say a like thing did once happen to the late M. de Genlis, the same which fell in Germany, leading the Huguenot troops in the third of our wars of Religion. For crossing the Seine one day in front of the Louvre with his mistress, she did let fall her handkerchief, which was a rich and beautiful one, into the water on purpose, and told him to leap into the river to recover the same. He, knowing not how to swim but like a stone, was fain to be excused; but she upbraiding him and saying he was a recreant lover, and no brave man, without a word more he did throw himself headlong into the stream, and thinking to get the handkerchief, would assuredly have been drowned, had he not been promptly rescued by a boat.

Myself believe that suchlike women, by such trials, do desire in this wise gracefully to be rid of their lovers, which mayhap do weary them. 'Twere much better did



they give them good favours once for all and pray them, for the love they bear them, to carry these forth to honourable and perilous places in the wars, and so prove their valour. Thus would they push them on to greater prowess, rather than make them perform the follies I have just spoke of, and of which I could recount an infinity of instances.

This doth remind me, how that, whenas we were advancing to lay siege to Rouen in the first war of Religion, Mademoiselle de Piennes, one of the honourable damsels of the Court, being in doubt as to whether the late M. de Gergeay was valiant enough to have killed, himself alone and man to man, the late deceased Baron d'Ingrande, which was one of the most valiant gentlemen of the Court, did for to prove his valiance, give him a favour,—a scarf which he did affix to his head harness. Then, on occasion of the making a reconnaissance of the Fort of St. Catherine, he did charge so boldly and valiantly on a troop of horse which had sallied forth of the city, that bravely fighting he did receive a pistol shot in the head, whereof he did fall stark dead on the spot. In this wise was the said damsel fully satisfied of his valour, and had he not been thus killed, seeing he had fought so well, she would have wedded him; but doubting somewhat his courage, and deeming he had slain the aforesaid Baron unfairly, for so she did suspect, she was fain, as she said, to make this visible trial of him. And verily, although there be many men naturally courageous, yet do the ladies push the same on to greater prowess; while if they be cold and cowardly, they do move them to some gallantry and warm them up to some show of fight.

We have an excellent example hereof in the beautiful

Agnes Sorel,<sup>4</sup> who seeing the King of France Charles VII.<sup>5</sup> deep in love with her, and recking of naught but to pleasure her, and slack and cowardly take no heed for his kingdom, did say to him one day, how that when she was a child, an astrologer had predicted she would be loved and served of one of the most valiant and courageous kings of Christendom. Accordingly, whenas the King did her the honour to love her, she did think he was the valorous monarch which had been predicted for her; but seeing him so slack, with so little care of his proper business, she did plainly perceive she was deceived in this, and that the courageous King intended was not he at all, but the King of England,<sup>6</sup> which did perform such fine feats of war, and did take so many of his fairest cities from under his very nose. "Wherefore," she said to her lover, "I am away to find him, for of a surety 'tis he the astrologer did intend." These words did so sorely prick the King's heart, as that he fell a-weeping; and thenceforward, plucking up spirit and quitting his hunting and his gardens, he did take the bit in his teeth,—and this to such good effect that by dint of good hap and his own valiance he did drive the English forth of his Kingdom altogether.

Bertrand du Guesclin<sup>7</sup> having wedded his wife Madame Tiphaine, did set himself all to pleasure her and so did neglect the management of the War, he who had been so forward therein afore, and had won him such praise and glory. But she did upbraid him with this remonstrance, how that before their marriage folk did speak of naught but him and his gallant deeds, but henceforth she might well be reproached for the discontinuance of her husband's fair deeds and good repute. This she said was a

very great disgrace to her and him, that he had now grown such a stay-at-home; and did never cease her chiding, till she had roused in him his erstwhile spirit, and sent him back to the wars, where he did even doughtier deeds than aforetime.

Thus do we see how this honourable lady did not love so much her night's pleasures as she did value the honour of her husband. And of a surety our wives themselves, though they do find us near by their side, yet an if we be not brave and valiant, will never really love us nor keep us by them of good and willing heart; whereas when we be returned from the wars and have done some fine and noble exploit, then they do verily and indeed love us and embrace of right good will, and themselves find the enjoyment most precious.

The fourth daughter of the Comte de Provence, father-in-law of St. Louis, and herself wife to Charles, Count of Anjou, brother of the said King, being sore vexed, high-spirited and ambitious Princess as she was, at being but plain Countess of Anjou and Provence, and because she alone of her three sisters, of whom two were Queens and the third Empress, did bear no better title than that my Lady and Countess, did never cease till she had prayed, beseeched and importuned her husband to conquer and get some Kingdom for himself. And they did contrive so well as that they were chose of Pope Urban to be King and Queen of the Two Sicilies; and they did away, the twain of them, to Rome with thirty galleys to be crowned by his Holiness, with all state and splendour, King and Queen of Jerusalem and Naples, which dominion he did win afterward, no less by his victorious arms than by the aid his wife afforded him, selling all her rings and jewels

for to provide the expenses of the war. So thereafter did they twain reign long and not unpeaceably in the fine kingdoms they had gotten.

Long years after, one of their grand-daughters, issue of them and theirs, Ysabeau de Lorraine to wit, without help of her husband René, did carry out a like emprise. For while her husband was prisoner in the hands of Charles, Duke of Burgundy, she being a Princess of a wise prudence and high heart and courage, the Kingdom of Sicily and Naples having meantime fallen to them in due succession, did assemble an army of thirty thousand men. This she did lead forth in person, and so conquer all the Kingdom and take possession of Naples.

## 3.



COULD name an host of ladies which have in suchlike ways done great and good service to their husbands, and how being high of heart and ambition they have pushed on and encouraged their mates to court fortune, and to win goods and grandeur and much wealth. And truly 'tis the most noble and most honourable fashion of getting of such things, thus at the sword's point.

I have known many men in this our land of France and at our Courts, which really more by the urging of their wives than by any will of their own, have undertaken and accomplished gallant exploits.

Many women on the other hand have I known, which thinking only of their own good pleasures, have stood in their husbands' way and kept the same ever by their side, hindering them of doing noble deeds, unwilling to have



them find amusement in aught else but in contenting them at the game of Venus, so keen were they after this sport. I could tell many a tale hereof, but I should be going too far astray from my subject, which is a worthier one for sure, seeing it doth handle virtue, than the other, which hath to do with vice. 'Tis more pleasant by far to hear tell of such ladies as have pushed on their men to noble deeds. Nor do I speak solely of married women, but of many others beside, which by dint of one little favour bestowed, have made their lovers to do many a fine thing they had never done else. For what a satisfaction is theirs! what incitement and warming of heart is greater than when at the wars a man doth think how he is well loved of his mistress, and if only he do some fine thing for the love of her, what kind looks and pretty ways, what fair glances, what kissings, delights and joys, he may hope after to receive of her?

Scipio amongst other rebukes he did administer to Massinissa, when, all but bloody yet from battle, he did wed Sophonisba, said to him: how that 'twas ill-becoming to think of ladies and the love of ladies, when at the wars. He must pardon me here, an if he will; but for my own part, I ween there is no such great contentment, nor one that giveth more courage and emulation to do nobly than they. I have travelled in that country myself in old days. And not only I, but all such, I do firmly believe, as take the field and fight, do find the same; and to them I make appeal. I am sure they be all of my opinion, be they who they may, and that whenas they are embarked on some good warlike emprise, and presently find themselves in the heat of battle and press of the foe, their heart doth swell within them as they think on their ladies, the

favours they do carry of them, and the caresses and gentle welcome they will receive of the same after the war is done, if they but escape,—and if they come to die, the sore grief they will feel for love of them and thought of their end. In a word, for the love of their ladies and fond thoughts of them, all emprises be facile and easy, the sternest fights be but merry tourneys to them, and death itself a triumph.

I do remember me how at the battle of Dreux the late M. des Bordes, a brave and gentle knight if ever there was one in his day, being Lieutenant under M. de Nevers, known at the first as the Comte d'Eu, a most excellent Prince and soldier, when he had to charge to break up a battalion of foot which was marching straight on the advanced guard where was the late M. de Guise the Great, and the signal to charge was given, the said Des Bordes, mounted on a grey barb, doth start forward instantly, adorned and garnished with a very fine favour his mistress had given him (I will not name her, but she was one of the fair and honourable damsels and great ladies of the Court), and as he gave rein, he did cry: "Ha! I am away to fight valiantly for the love of my mistress, or to die for her!" And this boast he failed not to fulfil; for after piercing the six first ranks, he fell at the seventh, borne down to earth. Now tell me if this lady had not well used her favour, and if she had aught to reproach her with for having bestowed it on him!

M. de Bussi again was a young soldier which did as great honour to his mistresses' favours as any man of his time, yea! and the favours of some I know of, which did merit more stricken fields and deeds of daring and good sword thrusts than did ever the fair Angelica of the

Paladins and Knights of yore, whether Christian or Saracen. Yet have I heard him often declare that in all the single combats and wars and general rencounters (for he hath fought in many such) where he hath ever been engaged, 'twas not so much for the service of his Prince nor yet for love of success as for the sole honour and glory of contenting his lady love. He was surely right in this, for verily all the success in the world and all its ambitions be little worth in comparison of the love and kindness of a fair and honourable lady and mistress.

And why else have so many brave Knights errant of the Round Table and so many valorous Paladins of France in olden time undertaken so many wars and far journeyings, and gone forth on such gallant emprises, if not for the love of the fair ladies they did serve or were fain to serve? I do appeal to our Paladins of France, our Rolands, Renauds, Ogiers, our Olivers, Yvons and Richards, and an host of others. And truly 'twas a good time and a lucky; for if they did accomplish some gallant deed for love of their ladies, these same fair ladies, in no wise ingrate, knew well how to reward them, whenas they hied them back to meet them, or mayhap would give them tryst there, in the forests and woodlands, or near some fair fountain or amid the green meadows. And is not this the guerdon of his doughtiness a soldier most doth crave of his lady love?

Well! it yet remains to ask, why women do so love these men of valiance? First, as I did say at the beginning, valour hath in it a certain force and overmastering power to make itself loved of its opposite. Then beside, there is a kind of natural inclination doth exist, constraining women to love great-heartedness, which to be

sure is an hundred times more lovable than cowardice,—even as virtue is alway more to be desired than vice.

Some ladies there be which do love men thus gifted with valour, because they imagine that just as they be brave and expert at arms and in the trade of War, they must be the same at that of Love.

And this rule doth hold really good with some. 'Twas fulfilled for instance by Cæsar, that champion of the world, and many another gallant soldier I have known, though I name no names. And such lovers do possess a very different sort of vigour and charm from rustics and folk of any other profession but that of arms, so much so that one push of these same gallants is worth four of ordinary folk. When I say this, I do mean in the eyes of women moderately lustful, not of such as be inordinately so, for the mere number is what pleaseth this latter sort. But if this rule doth hold good sometimes in some of these warlike fellows, and according to the humour of some women, it doth fail in others; for some of these valiant soldiers there be so broken down by the burden of their harness and the heavy tasks of war, that they have no strength left when they have to come to this gentle game of love, in such wise that they cannot content their ladies,—of whom some (and many are of such complexion), had liever have one good workman at Venus' trade, fresh and ground to a good point, than four of these sons of Mars, thus broken-winged.

I have known many of the sex of this sort and this humour; for after all, they say, the great thing is to pass one's time merrily, and get the quintessence of enjoyment out of it, without any special choice of persons. A good man of war is good, and a fine sight on the field of bat-



tle; but an if he can do naught a-bed, they declare, a good stout lackey, in good case and practice, is every whit as worth having as a handsome and valiant gentleman,—tired out.

I do refer me to such dames as have made trial thereof, and do so every day; for the gallant soldier's loins, be he as brave and valiant as he may, being broken and chafed of the harness they have so long carried on them, cannot afford the needful supply, as other men do, which have never borne hardship or fatigue.

Other ladies there be which do love brave men, whether it be for husbands or for lovers, to the end these may show good fight and so better defend their honour and chastity, if any detractors should be fain to befoul these with ill words. Several such I have seen at Court, where I knew in former days a very great and a very fair lady<sup>1</sup> whose name I had rather not give, who being much subject to evil tongues, did quit a lover, and a very favourite one, she had, seeing him backward to come to blows and pick a quarrel and fight it out, to take another<sup>2</sup> instead which was a mettlesome wight, a brave and valiant soul, which would gallantly bear his lady's honour on the point of his sword, without ever a man daring to touch the same in any wise.

Many ladies have I known in my time of this humour, wishful always to have a brave gallant for their escort and defence. This no doubt is a good and very useful thing oftentimes for them; but then they must take good heed not to stumble or let their heart change toward them, once they have submitted to their domination. For if these fellows do note the least in the world of their pranks and fickle changes, they do lead them a fine life and rebuke

them in terrible wise, both them and their new gallants, if ever they change. Of this I have seen not a few examples in the course of my life.

Thus do we see how suchlike women, those that will fain have at command suchlike brave and mettlesome lovers, must needs themselves be brave and very faithful in their dealings with the same, or at any rate so secret in their intrigues as that they may never be discovered. Unless indeed they do compass the thing by some arrangement, as do the Italian and Roman courtesans, who are fain ever to have a *bravo* (this is the name they give him) to defend and keep them in countenance; but 'tis always part of the bargain that they shall have other favoured swains as well, and the bravo shall never say one word.

This is mighty well for the courtesans of Rome and their bravos, but not for the gallant gentlemen of France and other lands. But an if an honourable dame is ready to keep herself in all firmness and constancy, her lover is bound to spare his life in no way for to maintain and defend her honour, if she do run the very smallest risk of hurt, whether to her life or her reputation, or of some ill word of scandal. So have I seen at our own Court several which have made evil tattlers to hold their tongues at a moment's notice, when these had started some detraction of their ladies or mistresses. For by devoir of knighthood and its laws we be bound to serve as their champions in any trouble, as did the brave Renaud for the fair Ginevra in Scotland,<sup>3</sup> the Señor de Mendoza for the beautiful Duchess I have spoke of above, and the Seigneur de Carouge for his own wedded wife in the days of King Charles VI., as we do read in our Chronicles. I could quote an host of other instances, as well of old as of mod-

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ern times, to say naught of those I have witnessed at our own Court; but I should never have done.

Other ladies I have known which have quitted cowardly fellows, albeit these were very rich, to love and wed gentlemen that did possess naught at all but sword and cloak, so to say. But then they were valorous and great-hearted, and had hopes, by dint of their valiance and bravery, to attain to rank and high estate. Though truly 'tis not the bravest that do most oft win these prizes; but they do rather suffer sore wrong, while many a time we behold the cowardly and fainthearted succeed instead. Yet be this as it may, such fortune doth never become these so well as it doth the men of valour.

But there, I should never get me done, were I to recount at length the divers causes and reasons why women do so love men of high heart and courage. I am quite sure, were I set on amplifying this Discourse with all the host of reasons and examples I might, I could make a whole book of it alone. However, as I wish not to tarry over one subject only, so much as to deal with various and divers matters, I will be satisfied to have said what I have said,—albeit sundry will likely blame me, how that such and such a point was surely worthy of being enriched by more instances and a string of prolix reasons, which themselves could very well supply, exclaiming, “Why! he hath clean forgot this; he hath clean forgot that.” I know my subject well enough for all that; and mayhap I know more instances than ever they could adduce, and more startling and private. But I prefer not to divulge them all, and not to give the names.

This is why I do hold my tongue. Yet, before making an end, I will add this further word by the way. Just

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as ladies do love men which be valiant and bold under arms, so likewise do they love such as be of like sort in love; and the man which is cowardly and over and above respectful toward them, will never win their good favour. Not that they would have them so overweening, bold and presumptuous, as that they should by main force lay them on the floor; but rather they desire in them a certain hardy modesty, or perhaps better a certain modest hardihood. For while themselves are not exactly wantons, and will neither solicit a man nor yet actually offer their favours, yet do they know well how to rouse the appetites and passions, and prettily allure to the skirmish in such wise that he which doth not take occasion by the forelock and join encounter, and that without the least awe of rank and greatness, without a scruple of conscience or a fear or any sort of hesitation, he verily is a fool and a spiritless poltroon, and one which doth merit to be forever abandoned of kind fortune.

I have heard of two honourable gentlemen and comrades, for the which two very honourable ladies, and of by no means humble quality, made tryst one day at Paris to go walking in a garden. Being come thither, each lady did separate apart one from the other, each alone with her own cavalier, each in a several alley of the garden, that was so close covered in with a fair trellis of boughs as that daylight could really scarce penetrate there at all, and the coolness of the place was very grateful. Now one of the twain was a bold man, and well knowing how the party had been made for something else than merely to walk and take the air, and judging by his lady's face, which he saw to be all a-fire, that she had longings to taste other fare than the muscatels that hung



on the trellis, as also by her hot, wanton and wild speech, he did promptly seize on so fair an opportunity. So catching hold of her without the least ceremony, he did lay her on a little couch that was there made of turf and clods of earth, and did very pleasantly work his will of her, without her ever uttering a word but only: "Heavens! Sir, what are you at? Surely you be the maddest and strangest fellow ever was! If anyone comes, whatever will they say? Great heavens! get out!" But the gentleman, without disturbing himself, did so well continue what he had begun that he did finish, and she to boot, with such content as that after taking three or four turns up and down the alley, they did presently start afresh. Anon, coming forth into another, open, alley, they did see in another part of the garden the other pair, who were walking about together just as they had left them at first. Whereupon the lady, well content, did say to the gentleman in the like condition, "I verily believe so and so hath played the silly prude, and hath given his lady no other entertainment but only words, fine speeches and promenading."

Afterward when all four were come together, the two ladies did fall to asking one another how it had fared with each. Then the one which was well content did reply she was exceeding well, indeed she was; indeed for the nonce she could scarce be better. The other, which was ill content, did declare for her part she had had to do with the biggest fool and most coward lover she had ever seen; and all the time the two gentlemen could see them laughing together as they walked and crying out: "Oh! the silly fool! the shamefaced poltroon and coward!" At this the successful gallant said to his companion: "Hark

to our ladies, which do cry out at you, and mock you sore. You will find you have overplayed the prude and coxcomb this bout." So much he did allow; but there was no more time to remedy his error, for opportunity gave him no other handle to seize her by. Natheless, now recognizing his mistake, after some while he did repair the same by certain other means which I could tell, an if I would.

Again I knew once two great Lords, brothers, both of them highly bred and highly accomplished gentlemen<sup>4</sup> which did love two ladies, but the one of these was of much higher quality and more account than the other in all respects. Now being entered both into the chamber of this great lady, who for the time being was keeping her bed, each did withdraw apart for to entertain his mistress. The one did converse with the high-born dame with every possible respect and humble salutation and kissing of hands, with words of honour and stately compliment, without making ever an attempt to come near and try to force the place. The other brother, without any ceremony of words or fine phrases, did take his fair one to a recessed window, and incontinently making free with her (for he was very strong), he did soon show her 'twas not his way to love *à l'espagnoles*, with eyes and tricks of face and words, but in the genuine fashion and proper mode every true lover should desire. Presently having finished his task, he doth quit the chamber; but as he goes, saith to his brother, loud enough for his lady to hear the words: "Do you as I have done, brother mine; else you do naught at all. Be you as brave and hardy as you will elsewhere, yet if you show not your hardihood here and now, you are disgraced; for here is no place of ceremony and respect, but one where you do

see your lady before you, which doth but wait your attack." So with this he did leave his brother, which yet for that while did refrain him and put it off to another time. But for this the lady did by no means esteem him more highly, whether it was she did put it down to an over chilliness in love, or a lack of courage, or a defect of bodily vigour. And still he had shown prowess enough elsewhere, both in war and love.

The late deceased Queen Mother did one day cause to be played, for a Shrove Tuesday interlude, at Paris at the Hôtel de Reims, a very excellent Comedy which Cornelio Fiasco, Captain of the Royal Gallies, had devised. All the Court was present, both men and ladies, and many folk beside of the city. Amongst other matters, was shown a young man which had laid hid a whole night long in a very fair lady's bedchamber, yet had never laid finger on her. Telling this hap to his friend, the latter asketh him: *Ch'avete fatto?* (What did you do?), to which the other maketh answer: *Niente* (Nothing). On hearing this, his friend doth exclaim: *Ah! poltronazzo, senza cuore! non havete fatto niente! che maldita sia la tua poltronneria!*—"Oh! poltroon and spiritless! you did nothing! a curse on your poltroonery then!"

The same evening after the playing of this Comedy, as we were assembled in the Queen's chamber, and were discoursing of the said play, I did ask a very fair and honourable lady, whose name I will not give, what were the finest points she had noted and observed in the Comedy, and which had most pleased her. She told me quite simply and frankly: The best point I noted was when his friend did make answer to the young man called Lucio, who had told him *che non haveva fatto niente* (that he had

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done nothing) in this wise, *Ah poltronazzo! non havete fatto niente! che maldita sia la tua poltronneria!*—"Oh! you poltroon! you did nothing! a curse be on your poltroonery!"

So you see how this fair lady which did talk with me was in agreement with the friend in reprobating his poltroonery, and that she did in no wise approve of him for having been so slack and unenterprising. Thereafter she and I did more openly discourse together of the mistakes men make by not seizing opportunity and taking advantage of the wind when it bloweth fair, as doth the good mariner.

This bringeth me to yet another tale, which I am fain, diverting and droll as it is, to mingle among the more serious ones. Well, then! I have heard it told by an honourable gentleman and a good friend of mine own, how a lady of his native place, having often shown great familiarities and special favour to one of her chamber lackeys, which did only need time and opportunity to come to a point, the said lackey, neither a prude nor a fool, finding his mistress one morning half asleep and lying on her bed, turned over away from the wall, tempted by such a display of beauty and a posture making it so easy and convenient, she being at the very edge of the bed, he did come up softly, and alongside the lady. She turning her head saw 'twas her lackey, which she was fain of; and just as she was, her place occupied and all, without withdrawing or moving one whit, and neither resisting nor trying in the very least to shake off the hold he had of her, did only say to him, turning round her head only and holding still for fear of losing him, "Ho! ho! Mister prude, and what hath made you so bold as to do this?" The lackey did



answer with all proper respect, "Madam, shall I leave?"—"That's not what I said, Mister prude," the lady replied, "I ask you, what made you so bold as to put yourself there?" But the other did ever come back to the same question, "Madam, shall I stop? if you wish, I will go out,"—and she to repeating again and again, "That is not what I say, not what I say, Mister prude!" In fact, the pair of them did make these same replies and repetitions three or four times over,—which did please the lady far better than if she had ordered her gallant to stop, when he did ask her. Thus it did serve her well to stick to her first question without ever a variation, and the lover in his reply and the repetition thereof. And in this wise did they continue to lie together for long after, the same rubric being always repeated as an accompaniment. For 'tis, as men say, the first batch only, and the first measure of wine, that costs dear.

A good lackey and an enterprising! To such bold fellows we must needs say in the words of the Italian proverb, *A bravo cazzo mai non manca favor*.

Well, from all this you learn how that there be many men which are brave, bold and valiant, as well in arms as in love; others which be so in arms, but not in love; others again, which be so in love and not in arms. Of this last sort was that rascally Paris, who indeed had hardihood and valiance enough to carry off Helen from her poor cuckold of a husband Menelaus, but not to do battle with him before Troy town.

Moreover this is why the ladies love not old men, nor such as be too far advanced in years, seeing such be very timid in love and shamefaced at asking favours. This is not because they have not concupiscence and desires as

great as young men, or even greater, but because they have not the powers to match. And this is what a Spanish lady meant, which said once: how that old men did much resemble persons who, whenas they do behold kings in their magnificence, domination and authority, do covet exceedingly to be like them, yet would they never dare to make any attempt against them to dispossess them of their kingdoms and seize their place. She was used further to say, *Y a penas es nacido el deseo, cuando se muere luego*,—"Scarce is the desire born, but it dies straight-way." Thus old men, when they do see fair objects of attack, dare not take action, *porque los viejos naturalmente son temerosos; y amor y temor no se caben en un saco*,—"for that old men are naturally timid; and love and fear do never go well in one pack." And indeed they are quite right; for they have arms neither for offence nor defence, like young folks, which have youth and beauty on their side. So verily, as saith the poet: naught is unbecoming to youth, do what it will; and as another hath it: two sorry sights,—an old man-at-arms and an old lover.

## 4.



VELL! enough hath been said on this subject; so I do here make an end and speak no more thereof. Only will I add somewhat on another point, one that is appertinent and belonging as it were to this, to wit: how just as fair ladies do love brave men, and such as be valorous and great-hearted, in like wise do men love women brave of heart and noble-spirited. And as noble-spirited and courageous men be ever more lovable and admirable than others,

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so is the like true of illustrious, noble-hearted and courageous dames,—not that I would have these perform the deeds of men, nor yet arm and accoutre them like a man,—as I have seen and known, as well as heard tell of, some which would mount a-horse-back like a man, carry their pistol at saddle-bow, shoot off the same, and generally fight like a man.

I could name one famous instance at any rate of a lady which did all this during the recent Wars of the League. But truly suchlike disguisement is an outrage to the sex. Besides its being neither becoming nor suitable, 'tis not lawful, and doth bring more harm and ill repute than many do suppose. Thus it did work great hurt to the gentle Maid of Orleans, who at her trial was sore calumniated on this very account, and this was in part cause of her sore and piteous downfall and death. Wherefore such masqueradings do like me not, nor stir me to any great admiration. Yet do I approve and much esteem a fair dame which doth make manifest her courageous and valiant spirit, being in adversity and downright need, by brave, womanly acts that do show a man's heart and courage. Without borrowing examples from the noble-hearted dames of Rome and of Sparta of yore, the which have excelled herein all other women in the world, there be others plain enough to be seen before our very eyes; and I do choose rather to adduce such modern instances belonging to our own day.

The first example I shall give, and in my eyes the finest I know of is that of those fair, honourable and doughty dames of Sienna, at the time of the revolt of their city against the intolerable yoke of the Imperialists (Ghibellines). For after the dispositions had been fixed for the

defence, the women of the city, being set aside therein as not apt for war like the men, were fain to make a display of their mettle, and show how that they could do something else than only ply their female tasks of day and night. So, to bear their part of the work of defence, they did divide them into three bands or companies; and one St. Anthony's day, in the month of January, they did appear in public led by three of the fairest ladies, and the greatest and best born, of all the city, in the Great Square of that town (and it is a very noble one), with their drums and ensigns.

The first was the Signora Forteguerra, clad in violet, her ensign of the same colour and all her company in like array, her banner bearing this device: *Pur che sia il vero* (Let the truth prevail). Now all these ladies were dressed in the guise of nymphs, with short skirts which did best discover and display the fine leg beneath. The second was the Signora Piccolomini, clad in scarlet, and her company and ensign the same, with a white cross and this device: *Pur che no l'habbia tutto* (Let him not have it all). The third was the Signora Livia Fausta, clad all in white, and her company in white and a white ensign, whereon was a palm, and for device: *Pur che l'habbia* (Let him have it, then!).

Round about and in the train of these three, which did seem very goddesses, were a good three thousand other women, both gentlewomen, citizens' wives and others, all fair to look upon, and all duly clad in their proper dress and livery, whether of satin, taffety, damask, or other silken stuff, and each and all firm resolved to live or die for freedom. Moreover each did carry a fascine on her shoulder for a fort which was a-building, while all cried



out together, *France, France!* With this spectacle, so rare and delightsome an one, the Cardinal of Ferrara and M. de Termes, the French King's Lieutenants, were so ravished, as that they did find no other pleasure but only in watching, admiring and commending these same fair and honourable ladies. And of a truth I have heard many say, both men and women, which were there present, that never was seen so fine a sight. And God knoweth, beautiful women be not lacking in this city of Sienna, and that in abundance, and without picking and choosing.

The men of the city, which of their own wishes were greatly set on winning their freedom, were yet more encouraged to the same by this noble display, unwilling to fall below the women in zeal. In such wise that all did vie with one another, Lords, gentlemen, citizens, trades-folk, artizans, rich and poor alike, and all did flock to the fort to imitate the example of these fair, virtuous and honourable dames. So all in much emulation,—and not laymen alone, but churchmen to boot,—did join in pushing on the good work. Then, on returning back from the fort, the men on one side, and the women likewise ranged in battle array in the great square before the Palace of the Signoria, they did advance one after other, and company after company, to salute the image of the Blessed Virgin, patroness of the city, singing the while sundry hymns and canticles in her honour, to airs so soft and with so gracious an harmony that, part of pleasure, part of pity, tears 'gan fall from the eyes of all the people present. These after receiving the benediction of the most reverend Cardinal of Ferrara, did withdraw, each to their own abode,—all the whole folk, men and women

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alike, with fixed resolve to do their duty yet better for the future.

This sacred ceremony of these ladies doth remind me (but without making comparison 'twixt the two) of a heathen one, yet goodly withal, which was performed at Rome at the period of the Punic Wars, as we do read in the Historian Livy. 'Twas a solemn progress and procession made by three times nine, which is twenty-seven, young and pretty Roman maids, all of them virgins, clad in longish frocks, of which history doth not however tell us the colours. These dainty maids, their solemn march and procession completed, did then make halt at a certain spot, where they proceeded to dance a measure before the assembled people, passing from hand to hand a cord or ribband, ranged all in order one after other, and stepping a round, accommodating the motion and twinkling of their feet to the cadence of the tune and the song they sang the while. It was a right pretty sight to see, no less for the beauty of the maids than for their sweet grace, their dainty way of dancing and the adroit tripping of their feet, the which is one of the chiefest charms of a maid, when she is skilled to move and guide the same daintily and well.

I have oft pictured to myself the measure they did so dance; and it hath brought to my mind one I have seen performed in my young days by the girls of mine own countryside, called the "garter." In this, the village girls, giving and taking the garter from hand to hand, would pass and re-pass these above their heads, then entangle and interlace the same between their legs, leaping nimbly over them, then unwinding them and slipping free with little, dainty bounds,—all this while keeping rank

one after other, without once losing cadence with the song or instrument of music which led the measure, in such wise that the thing was a mighty pretty thing to see. For the little leaps and bounds they gave, the interlacing and slipping free again, the wielding of the garter and the graceful carriage of the girls, did all provoke so dainty a smack of naughtiness, as that I do marvel much the said dance hath never been practised at Court in these days of ours. Pleasant 'tis to see the dainty drawers, and the fine leg freely exhibited in this dance, and which lass hath the best fitting shoe and the most alluring mien. But truly it can be better appreciated by the eye than described in words.

But to return to our ladies of Sienna. Ah! fair and valiant dames, you should surely never die,—you nor your glory, which will be for ever immortal. So too another fair and gentle maid of your city, who during its siege, seeing one night her brother kept a prisoner by sickness in his bed and in very ill case to go on guard, doth leave him there a-bed and slipping quietly away from his side, doth take his arms and accoutrements, and so, a very perfect likeness of her brother, maketh appearance with the watch. Nor was she discovered, but by favour of the night was really taken for him she did represent. A gentle act, in truth! for albeit she had donned a man's dress and arms, yet was it not to make a constant habit thereof, but for the nonce only to do a good office for her brother. And indeed 'tis said no love is like that of brother and sister, and further that in a good cause no risk should be spared to show a gentle intrepidity of heart, in whatsoever place it be.

I ween the corporal of the guard which was then in

command of the squad in which was this fair girl, when he wist of her act, was sore vexed he had not better recognized her, so to have published abroad her merit on the spot, or mayhap to have relieved her of standing sentry, or else merely to have taken his pleasure in gazing on her beauty and grace, and her military bearing; for no doubt at all she did study in all things to counterfeit a soldier's mien.

Of a surety so fine a deed could scarce be overpraised, and above all when the occasion was so excellent, and the thing carried out for a brother's sake. The like was done by the gentle Richardet, in the Romance, but for different purpose, when after hearing one evening his sister Bramante discourse of the beauties of the fair Princess of Spain, and of her own love and vain desires after her, he did take her accoutrements and fine frock, after she was to bed, and so disguiseth himself in the likeness of his sister,—the which he could readily accomplish, so like they were in face and beauty. Then presently, under this feigned form he did win from the said lovely Princess what was denied his sister by reason of her sex. Whereof, however, great hurt had come to him, but for the favour of Roger, who taking him for his mistress Bramante, did save him scatheless of death.<sup>1</sup>

Now as to the ladies of Sienna, I have heard it of M. de La Chapelle des Ursins, which was at that time in Italy, and did make report of this their gallant exploit to our late King Henri II. of France, how that this monarch did find the same so noble, that with tears in his eyes he took an oath, an if one day God should grant him peace or truce with the Emperor, he would hie him with his galleys across the Tuscan sea, and so to Sienna, to see



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this city so well affected to him and his party, and thank the citizens for their good will and gallantry, and above all to behold these fair and honourable ladies and give them especial thanks.

I am sure he would not have failed so to do, for he did highly honour the said good and noble dames. Accordingly he did write them, addressing chiefly the three chief leaders, letters the most gracious possible, full of thanks and compliments, the which did pleasure them greatly and animate their courage to yet an higher pitch.

Alas! the truce came right enough some while after; but meantime the city had been taken, as I have described elsewhere. Truly 'twas an irreparable loss to France to be deprived of so noble and affectionate an ally, which mindful and conscious of the ties of its ancient origin, was always fain to join us and take place in our ranks. For they say these gallant Siennese be sprung from that people of France which in Gaul they did call the Senones in old times, now known as the folk of Sens. Moreover they do retain to this day somewhat of the humour of us Frenchmen; they do very much wear their heart on their sleeve, as the saying is, and be quick, sudden and keen like us. The Siennese ladies likewise have much of those pretty ways and charming manners and graceful familiarities which be the especial mark of Frenchwomen.

I have read in an old Chronicle, which I have cited elsewhere, how King Charles VIII., on his Naples journey, when he did come to Sienna, was there welcomed with so magnificent and so triumphal an entry, as that it did surpass all the others he received in all Italy. They did even go so far by way of showing greater respect and as a sign of humbleness, as to take all the city gates from

off their hinges and lay the same flat on the ground; and so long as he did tarry there, the gates were thus left open and unguarded to all that came and went, then after, on his departure, set up again as before.

I leave you to imagine if the King, and all his Court and army, had not ample and sufficient cause to love and honour this city (as indeed he did always), and to say all possible good thereof. In fact their stay there was exceeding agreeable to him and to all, and 'twas forbid under penalty of death to offer any sort of insult, as truly not the very smallest did ever occur. Ah! gallant folk of Sienna, may ye live for ever! Would to heaven ye were still ours in all else, as it may well be, ye are yet in heart and soul! For the overrule of a King of France is far gentler than that of a Duke of Florence; and besides this, the kinship of blood can never go for naught. If only we were as near neighbours as we be actually remote from each other, we might very like be found at one in will and deed.

In like wise the chieftest ladies of Pavia, at the siege of that town by King Francis I. of France, following the lead and example of the noble Countess Hippolita de Malespina, their generalissima, did set them to carrying of the earth-baskets, shifting soil and repairing the breaches in their walls, vying with the soldiery in their activity.

Conduct like that of the Siennese dames I have just told of, myself did behold on the part of certain ladies of La Rochelle,<sup>2</sup> at the siege of their town. And I remember me how on the first Sunday of Lent during the siege, the King's brother, our General, did summon M. de la Noue to come before him on his parole, and speak with

him and give account of the negotiations he had charged him withal on behalf of the said city,—all the tale whereof is long and most curious, as I do hope elsewhere to describe the same. M. de la Noue failed not to appear, to which end M. d'Estrozze was given as an hostage on the town, and truce was made for that day and for the next following.

This truce once concluded, there did appear immediately, as on our side we too did show us outside our trenches, many of the towns-folk on the ramparts and walls. And notable over all were seen an hundred or so of noble ladies and citizens' wives and daughters, the greatest, richest and fairest of all the town, all clad in white, the dress, which did cover head as well as body, being all of fine white Holland linen, that 'twas a very fair sight to see. And they had adopted this dress by reason of the fortification of the ramparts at which they were at work, whether carrying of the earth-baskets or moving the soil. Now other garments would have soon grown foul, but these white ones had but to be sent to the wash, and all was well again; beside, with this white costume were they more readily distinguished among the rest. For our part we were much delighted to behold these fair ladies, and I do assure you many of us did find more divertisement herein than in aught else. Nor were they the least chary of giving us a sight of them, for they did line the edge of the rampart, standing in a most gracious and agreeable attitude, so as they were well worth our looking at and longing after.

We were right curious to learn what ladies they were. The towns-folk did inform us they were a company of ladies so sworn and banded together, and so attired for

the work at the fortifications and for the performing of suchlike services to their native city. And of a truth did they do good service, even to the more virile and stalwart of them bearing arms. Yea! I have heard it told of one, how, for having oft repulsed her foes with a pike, she doth to this day keep the same carefully as 'twere a sacred relic, so that she would not part with it nor sell it for much money, so dear a home treasure doth she hold it.

I have heard the tale told by sundry old Knights Commanders of Rhodes, and have even read the same in an old book, how that, when Rhodes was besieged by Sultan Soliman, the fair dames and damsels of that place did in no wise spare their fair faces and tender and delicate bodies, for to bear their full share of the hardships and fatigues of the siege, but would even come forward many a time at the most hot and dangerous attacks, and gallantly second the knights and soldiery to bear up against the same. Ah! fair Rhodian maids, your name and fame is for all time; and ill did you deserve to be now fallen under the rule of infidel barbarians! In the reign of our good King Francis I., the town of Saint-Riquier in Picardy was attempted and assailed by a Flemish gentleman, named Domrin, Ensign of M. du Ru, accompanied by two hundred men at arms and two thousand foot folk, beside some artillery. Inside the place were but an hundred foot men, the which was far too few for defence. It had for sure been captured, but that the women of the town did appear on the walls with arms in hand, boiling water and oil and stones, and did gallantly repulse the foe, albeit these did exert every effort to gain an entry. Furthermore two of the said brave ladies did wrest a pair



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of standards from the hands of the enemy, and bore them from the walls into the town, the end of all being that the besiegers were constrained to abandon the breach they had made and the walls altogether, and make off and retire. The fame of this exploit did spread through all France, Flanders and Burgundy; while King Francis, passing by the place some time after, was fain to see the women concerned, and did praise and thank them for their deed.

The ladies of Péronne<sup>3</sup> did in like gallant wise, when that town was besieged by the Comte de Nassau, and did aid the brave soldiers which were in the place in the same fashion as their sisters of Saint-Riquier, for which they were esteemed, commended and thanked of their sovereign.

The women of Sancerre<sup>4</sup> again, in the late civil wars and during the siege of their town, were admired and praised for the noble deeds they did at that time in all sorts.

Also, during the War of the League, the dames of Vitré<sup>5</sup> did acquit them right well in similar wise at the besieging of the town by M. de Mercueur. The women there be very fair and always right daintily put on, and have ever been so from old time; yet did they not spare their beauty for to show themselves manlike and courageous. And surely all manly and brave-hearted deeds, at such a time of need, are as highly to be esteemed in women as in men.

Of the same gallant sort were of yore the women of Carthage, who whenas they beheld their husbands, brothers, kinsfolk and the soldiery generally cease shooting at the foe, for lack of strings to their bows, these being all

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worn out by dint of shooting all through the long and terrible siege, and for the same cause no longer being able to provide them with hemp, or flax, or silk, or aught else wherewithal to make bow-strings, did resolve to cut off their lovely tresses and fair, yellow locks, not sparing this beauteous honour of their heads and chief adornment of their beauty. Nay! with their own fair hands, so white and delicate, they did twist and wind the same and make it into bow-strings to supply the men of war. And I leave you to imagine with what high courage and mettle these would now stretch and bend their bows, shoot their arrows and fight the foe, bearing as they did such fine favours of the ladies.

We read in the History of Naples<sup>6</sup> how that great Captain Sforza, serving under the orders of Queen Jeanne II., having been taken prisoner by the Queen's husband, James, and set in strict confinement and having some taste of the strappado, would without a doubt ere much longer have had his head cut off, but that his sister did fly to arms and straight take the field. She made so good a fight, she in her own person, as that she did capture four of the chiefest Neapolitan gentlemen, and this done, sent to tell the King that whatsoever treatment he should deal to her brother, the same would she meet out to his friends. The end was, he was constrained to make peace and deliver him up safe and sound. Ah! brave and gallant-hearted sister, rising so superior to her sex's weakness!

I do know of certain sisters and kinswomen, who if but they had dared a like deed, some while ago, might mayhap have saved alive a gallant brother of theirs, which

was undone for lack of help and timely succour of the sort.

## 5.



OW am I fain to have done with the consideration of these warlike and great-hearted dames in general, and to speak of some particular instances of the same. And as the fairest example Antiquity hath to show us, I will adduce the gallant Zenobia<sup>1</sup> only, to answer for all. This Queen, after the death of her husband, was too wise to waste her time, like so many others in like case, in mere lamentation and vain regrets, but did grasp the reins of his empire in the name of her children, and make war against the Romans and their Emperor Aurelian,<sup>2</sup> at that time reigning at Rome. Much trouble did she give these foes for eight long years, till at the last coming to a pitched battle with his legions, she was vanquished therein and taken prisoner and brought before the Emperor. On his asking her how she had had the hardihood to make war against the Emperors of Rome, she did answer only this: "Verily! I do well recognise that you are Emperor, seeing that you have vanquished me."

So great content had he of his victory, and so proud thereof was he and exalted, that he was fain to hold a triumph over her. So with an exceeding great pomp and magnificence did she walk before his triumphal car, right gorgeously put on and adorned with much wealth of pearls and precious stones, superb jewels and great chains of gold, wherewith she was bound about the body and by the hands and feet, in sign of being captive and

slave of her conqueror. And so it was that by reason of the heavy weight of her jewels and chains she was constrained to make sundry pauses and to rest her again and again on this march of triumph. A fine thing, of a surety, and an admirable, that all vanquished and prisoner as she was, she could yet give the law to her triumphant conqueror, and thus make him tarry and wait her pleasure till that she had recovered breath! A great instance too of good feeling and honest courtesy on the part of the Emperor, so to allow her breathing space and rest, and to suffer her weakness, rather than unduly to constrain or press her to hurry more than she well could. So that one doth scarce know which to commend the more, the honourable courtesy of the Emperor, or the Queen's way of acting,—who it may well be, did play this part of set purpose, not so much forced thereto by her actual weakness of body and weariness, as for to make some show of pride and prove to all how she would and could gather this little sprig of respect in the evening of her fortunes no less than she had done in the morning-tide of the same, and let them see how the Emperor did grant her this much privilege, to wait on her slow steps and lingering progress.

Much was the Queen gazed at and admired by men and women alike, not a few of which last had been but too glad to resemble so fair an apparition. For truly she was one of the most lovely of women, by what is said of the historians of these events. She was of a very fine, tall and opulent figure, say they, her carriage right noble, and her grace and dignity to match; furthermore her face very beautiful and exceeding pleasing, her eyes dark and piercing. Beside her other beauties, these writers do



give her fine and very white teeth, a keen wit and a modest bearing, a sincere and at need a kind and merciful heart. Her speech was eloquent and spoke with a fine clear voice; moreover she was used always to express her ideas and wishes herself to her soldiers, and would many a time harangue the same publicly.

I ween he did so show her to best advantage, thus richly and gracefully attired in women's weeds, no less than when she was armed in all points as the Warrior Queen. For sex doth always count for much; and we may rightly suppose the Emperor was fain to display her at his triumph only under guise of her own fair sex, wherein she would seem most beauteous and agreeable to the populace in all the perfection of her charms. Furthermore, 'tis to be supposed, so lovely as she was, the Emperor had tasted and enjoyed her loveliness, and was yet in the enjoyment thereof. So albeit he had vanquished her in one fashion, yet had she,—or he, if you prefer it so, for the two be as one in this,—won the victory in another.

Mine own wonder is, that seeing the said Zenobia was so beautiful, the Emperor did not take her and keep her for one of his mistresses; or else that she did not open and establish by his permission, or the Senate's, a shop or market of love and harlotry, as did the fair Flora in the same city, for to win wealth and store up much gear and goods, by the toil of her body and shaking of her bed. For to such a market had surely resorted all the greatest men of Rome, one vying with other in eagerness; seeing there is no contentment 'twould seem, or satisfaction in all the world like that of a man's taking his will of a Royal or Princely person, and enjoying of a fair Queen, or Princess or a high-born Lady. As to this I

do appeal to such men as have embarked on these voyages, and made such good traffic there. Now in this fashion would Queen Zenobia have soon grown rich out of the purse of these great folks, as did Flora, which did receive no others in her place of commerce. Had it not been far better for her to make of her life a scene of merry-making and magnificence, of money getting and compliments, than to have fallen into that need and extremity of poverty she did come to? For she was constrained to gain her bread a-spinning among common work-women, and would have died of hunger, but that the Senate, taking pity of her in view of her former greatness, did decree her a pension for her maintenance, and some trifling lands and possessions, which were for long after known as "Zenobia's Lands." For indeed and indeed is poverty a sore evil; and whosoever can avoid the same, no matter what transformation be taken to that end, doth well and right, as one I wot of was used to declare.

Thus we see how Zenobia did not carry her high courage to the end of her career, as she should,—and as folk should ever persist in every course of action to the last. 'Tis said she had had a triumphal car constructed, the most magnificent ever seen in Rome, to the end she might, as she was often used to say in her days of high prosperity and glorying, hold triumph therein at Rome. For her ambition was to conquer and subdue the Roman Empire! Alas! for her presumption; for it did all fall out quite otherwise, and the Emperor having won the day, did take her car for himself, and use it in his own triumph, while she did march a-foot, and did make as much triumph and ceremonial over her as if he had vanquished a puissant King,—and more. Yet be sure, a victory won

over a woman, be it gained how it may, is no very great or famous exploit!

After a like fashion did Augustus long to triumph over Cleopatra; but he got no success in this. She did forestall him in good time, and in the same way which Aemilius Paulus did signify in what he said to Perseus,<sup>3</sup> when in his captivity he did beseech him to have pity on him, answering him he should have seen to that beforehand, meaning that he ought to have killed himself.

I have heard say that our late King Henri II. did long for no other thing so sore as to be able to take prisoner the Queen of Hungary, and this not to treat her ill, albeit she had given him many causes of offence by her devastations of his territory, but only to have the glory of holding this great Princess captive, and to see what bearing and countenance she would show in her prison, and if she would then be so gallant and proud-spirited as at the head of her armies. For in truth there is naught else so fine and gallant as such a fair, brave and high-born lady, when she hath will and courage as had this same Princess, which did much delight in the name the Spanish soldiers had given her; for just as they did call her brother the Emperor *el padre de los soldados*, "the father of the soldiers," so did they entitle her *la madre*, "the mother," of the same. So in old days, in the times of the Romans, was Victoria or Victorina known in her armies by the name of "the mother of the camp." Of a surety, an if a great and beautiful lady do undertake an exploit of war, she doth contribute much to its success and giveth much encouragement and spirit to her folk, as myself have seen in the case of our own Queen Mother, Catherine de Medici, which did often visit

our armies, and so doing did greatly animate their courage and rouse their ardour. The same is done at this present by her grand-daughter, the Infanta<sup>4</sup> in Flanders, which doth take the lead of her army, and show herself a valorous chief of her fighting men,—so much so that without her and her noble and delightful presence, Flanders could never have been retained, as all men allow. And never did even the Queen of Hungary herself, her grand-aunt, make so fair a show of beauty, valour, great-heartedness and graceful bearing.

In our histories of France we do read of how much avail was the presence of the noble-hearted Comtesse de Montfort,<sup>5</sup> when shut up and besieged in Hennebon. For albeit her men were brave and valiant, and had quit themselves in battle and withstood the enemy's assaults as well as ever any folk could, yet did they at the last begin to lose heart and talk of surrendering. But she did harangue them so eloquently, and did re-animate their courage with such good and intrepid words, inspiriting them so finely and so well, as that they did hold out till the succour, so long and eagerly desired, did arrive, and the siege was raised. Nay! she did better still; for whenas the enemy were set on the attack and were all busied therewith, seeing their tents to be all left empty and unprotected, she did make a sally, mounted on a good horse and with fifty good horses to follow her. In this wise doth she surprise the camp and set it a-fire, the result being that Charles de Blois, deeming himself to be betrayed, did straight abandon the assault. On this subject, I will add yet another little tale:

During the late Wars of the League, the Prince de Condé, since deceased, being at Saint-Jean, did send to



demand of Madame de Bourdeille,<sup>6</sup> then a widow of the age of forty, and a very handsome woman, six or seven of the wealthiest tenants of her estate, the which had taken refuge in her castle of Mathas at her side. She did refuse him outright, declaring she would never betray nor give up these unhappy folk, who had put themselves under her protection and trusted to her honour for their safety. On this he did summon her for the last time, informing her that unless she would deliver them up to him, he would teach her better obedience. She did make reply to this (for myself was with her by way of rendering help) that, seeing he knew not himself how to obey, she did find it very strange he should wish to make others do so, and that so soon as he should have obeyed his King's orders, she would obey him. For the rest, she did declare that for all his threats, she was afraid neither of his cannon nor of his siege, and how that she was descended from the far-famed Comtesse de Montfort, from whom her folk had inherited the place, and herself too, and therewith some share of her gallantry. Further that she was determined to defend the same so well as that he should never take it, and that she should win no less fame herein than her ancestress, the aforesaid Countess, had done at Hennebon. The Prince did ponder long over this reply, and did delay some days' space, without further threatening her. Yet, had he not presently died, he would assuredly have laid siege to her castle; but in that case was she right well prepared in heart, resolution, men and gear, to receive him warmly, and I do think he would have gotten a shameful rebuff.

Machiavelli, in his book *On the Art of War*, doth relate how that Catherine, Countess of Forli, was be-

sieged in that her good town fortress by Cæsar Borgia, aided by the French army, which did make a most gallant resistance to him, yet at the last was taken. The cause of its loss was this, that the said strong town was over full of fortresses and strongholds, for folk to retire from the one to the other; so much so that Borgia having made his approaches, the Signor Giovanni de Casale (whom the said Countess had chose for her helper and protector), did abandon the breach to withdraw into his strongholds. Through the which error, Borgia did force an entrance and took the place. And so, saith the author, these errors did much wrong the high-hearted courage and repute of the said gallant Countess, which had withstood an army the King of Naples and the Duke of Milan had not dared to face; and albeit the issue was unfortunate, yet did she win the honour she so well deserved, and for this exploit many rhymes and verses were writ in Italy in her honour. This passage is one well worthy the attention of all such as have to do with the fortifying of places of strength, and do set them to build therein great numbers of castles, strongholds, fortresses and citadels.

To return to our proper subject, we have had in times past many Princesses and high-born ladies in this our land of France, which have given excellent marks of their prowess. As did Paule, daughter of the Comte de Penth-*èvre*, who was besieged in Roye by the Comte de Charolais, and did there show herself so gallant and great-hearted as that, on the town being taken, the Count did grant her very good conditions, and had her conducted in safety to Compiègne, not suffering any hurt to be done her. So greatly did he honour her for her valour,—and this albeit he felt deep resentment against her husband,

whom he held guilty of having tried to work his death by black arts and sundry evil devices of images and candles.

Richilda,<sup>7</sup> only daughter and heiress of Mons in Hainault, and wife of Baldwyn the Sixth, Count of Flanders, did make all efforts against Robert the Frisian, her brother-in-law, appointed guardian of the children of Flanders, for to take away from him the duty and administration of the same, and have it assigned to herself. To which end she did take up arms with the help of Philip, King of France, and hazarded two battles<sup>8</sup> against Count Robert. In the first she was taken prisoner, as was likewise her foe, the said Count Robert, but afterward were the twain given back in exchange one of the other. A second battle followed, which she lost, her son Arnulphe being slain therein, and was driven back to Mons.

Ysabel of France, daughter of King Philippe le Bel, and wife of Edward II.<sup>9</sup> of England, and Duke of Guienne, was ill looked on of the King her husband, through the intrigues of Hugh le Despenser, whereby she was constrained to withdraw to France with her son Edward. Afterward she did return to England with the Chevalier de Hainault, her kinsman, and an army which she did lead thither, and by means of which she did presently take her husband prisoner. Him she did deliver up into the hands of men which did soon bring about his death; a fate that overtook herself likewise, for by reason of her loves with a certain Lord Mortimer, she was confined by her own son in a castle, and there ended her days. She it was that did afford the English pretext to quarrel with France to the sore hurt of the same.

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Yet surely we have here a piece of base ingratitude on her son's part, who all forgetful of great benefit received, did so cruelly treat his mother for so small a fault. Small I call it, for that 'twas but natural, and an easy thing, that after dealing long with men of arms, and grown so accustomed to go in manly guise with them amid armies and tents and camps, she should do the like also a-bed.

This is a thing oft times seen to happen. For example I do refer me to our Queen Léonor, Duchess of Guienne, which did accompany her husband over seas and to the Holy Wars. By dint of much frequenting of men at arms and troopers and such folk, she did come to derogate very gravely from her honour,—so far as that she did have dealings even with the Saracens. For the which the King her husband did put her away, a thing that cost us very dear. We can but suppose she was fain to try whether these worthy foes were as gallant champions in a lady's chamber as in the open field, and that mayhap 'twas her humour to ever love valiant wights, and that one valiance doth ever attract another, as virtue doth to virtue. For verily he saith most true, which doth declare virtue to be like the lightning, that pierceth through all things.

The said Queen Léonor was not the only lady which did accompany her husband to these same Holy Wars. But both before her day, and with her, and after her, no few other Princesses and great ladies did along with their lords take the cross,—not that they did therefore cross their legs, but did rather open these and stretch them right wide, in such wise that while some did remain there for good and all, others came back from the wars most



finished harlots. So under pretext of visiting the Holy Sepulchre, amid all that press of arms they did much amorous wantoning; for verily, as I have observed afore, arms and love do well accord together, so close and congruous is the sympathy betwixt these twain.

Suchlike dames ought surely to be esteemed, loved and treated like men,—not as the Amazons did of old, which proclaiming themselves daughters of Mars, did rid them of their husbands, pretending marriage was sheer slavery; yet desire enough and to spare had they to go with other men, for to have daughters of them, but killing all the male children.

Jo. Nauclerus, in his *Cosmography*, relates how, in the year of Christ 1123, after the death of Tibussa, Queen of the Bohemians, she who did first close in the town of Prague with walls, and who did very greatly abhor the power and domination of men, there was one of her damsels, by name Valasca, which did so well gain over the maids and matrons of that land by her fair and alluring promises of liberty, and did so thoroughly disgust and set them against their servitude to manfolk, as that they did slay each her man, one her husband, another her brother, another her kinsman or next neighbour, and so in less than no time were mistresses of the realm. Then having taken their husbands' harness of war, they did make such good use thereof, and grew so valiant and skilled in arms, fighting after the Amazon fashion, as that they soon gat them several victories. Yet were they presently, by the conduct and cunning wiles of one Primislaus, husband of Tibussa, a man she had raised up from low and humble state, routed entirely and put to death. This was sure God Almighty's vengeance for so heinous

an act and dread attempt, no less indeed than to destroy the human race itself.

## 6.

**T**HUS did these Amazonian dames find no other fashion of showing forth their gallant spirit for fine, bold and manly exploits but only by these cruel deeds we have named. On the contrary, how many Empresses, Queens, Princesses and other high-born Ladies, have done the like by means of noble acts, both in the governance and management of their dominions, and in other excellent ways, whereof the Histories be so full that I need not recount the same. For the desire of holding sway, of reigning and ruling, doth lodge within women's breasts no less than in men's, and they be just as eager after domination as the other sex.

Well! now I am about to speak of one that was unsullied of this ambition, to wit Vittoria Colonna,<sup>1</sup> wife of the Marquis de Pescaire. I have read of this lady in a Spanish book, how that whenas the said Marquis did hearken to the fine offers made him by Hieronimo Mouron on the Pope's behalf (as I have said in a previous passage) of the Kingdom of Naples, if only he would enter into the league with him, she being informed of the matter by her husband himself, who did never hide aught from her of his privy affairs, neither small nor great, did write to him (for she had an excellent gift of language), and bade him remember his ancient valour and virtue, the which had given him such glory and high repute, as that these did exceed the fame and fortune of the greatest

Kings of the earth. She then went on: *non con grandeza de los reynos, de Estados ny de hermosos titulos, sino con fè illustre y clara virtud, se alcançava la honra, la qual con loor siempre vivo, legava a los descendientes; y que no havia ningun grado tan alto que no fuese vencido de una trahicion y mala fe. Que por esto, ningun deseo tenia de ser muger de rey, queriendo antes ser muger de tal capitan, que no solamente en guerra con valorosa mano, mas en paz con gran honra de animo no vencido, havia sabido vencer reyes, y grandissimos prncipes, y capitanes, y darlos a triunfos, y imperiarlos,*—"not by the greatness of Kingdoms and of vast Dominions, nor yet of high and sounding titles, but by fair faith and unsullied virtue, is honour won,—the virtue that with ever living praise doth go down to all descendants. And there is never a rank so exalted but it were undone and spoiled by treason wrought and good faith broke. For such a prize she had no wish to be a King's wife, but had rather be a simple Captain's such as he, which not alone in war by his valiant arm, but in peace likewise with the honour of an unbroken spirit, had been strong to vanquish Kings, great Princes and mighty Captains, to triumph over the same and master them." High courage and virtue and truth did all mark this lady's words; for truly to reign by ill faith is a very evil and sorry thing, but to give the law to Kings and kingdoms by honesty and worth a right noble one.

Fulvia, wife of Publius Clodius, and in second wedlock that of Mark Antony, finding but small amusement in her household tasks, did set herself to higher business, to manage affairs of State that is, till she did win herself the repute of ruling the Rulers of Rome. And indeed

Cleopatra did owe her some gratitude and obligation for having so well trained and disciplined Mark Antony to obey and bend him under the laws of submission.

We read moreover of that great French Prince Charles Martel, which in his day would never take nor bear the title of King, as 'twas within his power to do, but liked better to govern Kings and give orders to the same.

However let us speak of some of our own countrywomen. We had, in our War of the League, Madame de Montpensier, sister of the late Duc de Guise, who was a great Stateswoman, and did contribute much, as well by the subtile inventions of her fine spirit as by the labour of her hands, to build up the said league. And after the same had been now well established, playing one day at cards (for she doth well love this pastime) and taking the first deal, on their telling her she should well shuffle the cards, she did answer before all the company: "I have shuffled the cards so well, as that they could not be better shuffled or combined together." This would all have turned out well, if only her friends had lived; on whose unhappy end however, without losing heart at all at such a loss, she did set herself to avenge them. And having heard the news when in Paris, she doth not shut herself in her chamber to indulge her grief, as most other women would have done, but cometh forth of her house with her brother's children, and holding these by the hand, doth take them up and down the city, making public mourning of her bereavement before the citizens, rousing the same by her tears and piteous cries and sad words which she did utter to all, to take up arms and rise in fierce protest, and insult the King's<sup>1</sup> house and picture, as we have seen done, and I do hope to relate



in his life, and deny all fealty to him, swearing rank rebellion to his authority, all which did presently result in his murder. As to which 'tis well enough known what persons, men and women, did counsel the same, and are properly guilty thereof. Of a surety no sister's heart, losing such brothers, could well digest such deadly venom without vengeance of this foul murder.

I have heard it related how after she had thus put the good folk of Paris in so great a state of animosity and dissatisfaction, she did set her forth to ask of the Duke of Parma his help toward her vengeance. So thither she maketh her way, but by such long and heavy stages as that her coach horses were left so wearied out and foundered, stranded in the mire somewhere in the very midst of Picardy, that they could not go another step either forward or backward, nor put one foot before another. As chance would have it, there did pass that way a very honourable gentleman of that countryside, which was a Protestant, and who, albeit she was disguised both as to name and in dress, did recognize her well enough. But yet, ignoring all the hurts she had wrought against his fellows in religion, and the hatred she bare them, with frank and full courtesy, he did thus accost her: "Madam, I know you well, and am your most humble servant. I find you in ill case, and beg you, an if you will, come to my house, which is close at hand, to dry your clothes and rest you. I will afford you every convenience I can to the very best of my ability. Have no fear; for though I be of the reformed faith, which you do hate so sore in us, I would fain not leave you without offering you a courtesy you do stand much in need of." This fair offer she did in no wise refuse, but

did accept very readily; then after that he had provided her with such things as were needful, she doth take the road again, he conducting her on her way two leagues, though all the while she did keep secret from him the purport of her journey. Later on in the course of the war, by what I have heard, she did repay her debt to the said gentleman by many acts of courtesy done him.

Many have wondered at her trusting of herself to him, being Huguenot as he was. But there! necessity hath no law; and beside, she did see him so honourable seeming, and heard him speak so honestly and frankly, that she could not but believe him disposed to deal fairly with her.

As for Madame de Nemours, her mother, who was thrown into prison after the murder of her noble son's children, there can be little doubt of the despair and desolation she was left in by so intolerable a loss; and albeit till that day she had ever shown herself of a gentle and cold humour, and one that did need good and sufficient cause to rouse her, she did now spew forth a thousand insults against the King, and cast in his teeth a thousand curses and execrations, going so far (for verily what deed or word could ever match the vehemence of such a loss and bitter sorrow?) as always to speak of him by no other name but this, *that Tyrant*. Later, being come somewhat to herself, she would say: "Alas! what say I,—Tyrant? Nay! nay! I will not call him so, but a most good and clement King, if only he will kill me as he hath killed my children, to take me out of the wretchedness wherein I am, and remove me to the blessedness of God's heaven!" Later again, softening still further her words and bitter cries, and finding some surcease of sorrow, she would say naught else but only, "Ah! my

children! my poor children!"—repeating these same words over and over again with floods of tears, that 'twould have melted an heart of stone. Alas! she might well lament and deplore them so sore, being so good and great hearted, so virtuous and so valorous, as they were, but above all the noble Duc de Guise, a worthy eldest son and true paragon of all valour and true-heartedness. Moreover she did love her children so fondly, that one day as I was discoursing with a noble lady of the Court of the said Madame de Nemours, she told me how that Princess was the happiest in all the world, for sundry reasons which she did give me,—except only in one thing, which was that she did love her children over much; for that she did love them with such excess of fondness as that the common anxiety she had of their safety and the fear some ill should happen them, did cloud all her happiness, making her to live always in inquietude and alarm for their sake. I leave you then, reader, to imagine how grievous was the sorrow, bitterness and pain she did feel at the death of these twain, and how lively the terror for the other, which was away in the neighbourhood of Lyons, as well as for the Duke her husband, then a prisoner. For of his imprisonment she had never a suspicion, as herself did declare, nor of his death neither, as I have said above.

When she was removed from the Castle of Blois to be conveyed to that of Amboise for straiter confinement therein, just as she had passed the gate, she did turn her round and lifted her head toward the figure of King Louis XII., her grandfather, which is there carven in stone above the door, on horseback and with a very noble mien and warlike bearing. So she, tarrying there

a little space and gazing thereon, said in a loud voice before a great number of folk which had come together, with a fine bold look which did never desert her: "An if he which is there pourtrayed were alive, he would never suffer his granddaughter thus to be carried away prisoner, and treated as she is this day." Then with these words, she did go on her way, without further remonstrance. Understand this, that in her heart she was invoking and making appeal to the manes of that her great-hearted ancestor, to avenge her of the injustice of her imprisonment. Herein she acted precisely as did certain of the conspirators for Cæsar's death, which as they were about to strike their blow, did turn them toward the statue of Pompey, and did inwardly invoke and make appeal to the shade of his valiant arm, so puissant of old, to conduct the emprise they were set on to a successful issue. It may well be the invocation of this Princess may have something aided and advanced the death of the King which had so outraged her. A lady of high heart and spirit which doth thus brood over vengeance to come is no little to be dreaded.

I do remember me how, when her late husband, the Duc de Guise, did get the stroke whereof he died, she was at the time in his camp, having come thither some days previously to visit the same. So soon as ever he did come into his quarters wounded, she did advance to meet him as far as the door of his lodging all tearful and despairing, and after saluting him, did suddenly cry out: "Can it be that the wretch which hath struck this blow and he that hath set him on (signifying her suspicion of the Admiral de Coligny) should go unpunished? Oh God! an if thou art just, as thou must needs



be, avenge this deed; or else.....," but stopping at this word, she did not end her sentence, for that her noble husband did interrupt her, saying: "Nay! dear heart, defy not God. An if 'tis He which hath sent me this for my sins, His will be done, and we should glorify him therefor. But an if it come from other, seeing vengeance is His alone, He will surely exact the penalty without you." Natheless, when he was dead, did she so fiercely follow up her revenge, as that the murderer was torn to pieces of four horses, while the supposed author of the crime was assassinated after the lapse of some years, as I will tell in its proper place. This was due to the instruction she did give her son, as myself have seen, and the counsel and persuasion she did feed him withal from his tenderest years, till at the last final and complete vengeance was accomplished.

## 7.



HE counsel and appeal of great-hearted wives and loving mothers be of no small avail in such matters. As to this, I do remember me how, when King Charles IX. was making his Royal progress about his Kingdom, and was now at Bordeaux, the Baron de Bournazel was put in prison, a very brave and honourable gentleman of Gascony, for having slain another gentleman of his own neighbourhood, named La Tour,—and, so 'twas said, by dint of much traitorous subtlety. The widow did so eagerly press for his punishment, as that care was taken the news should reach the King's and Queen's chambers, that they were about to cut off the said Baron's head. Hereon did the

gentlemen and ladies of the Court of a sudden bestir themselves, and much effort was made to save his life. Twice over were the King and Queen besought to grant his pardon. The High Chancellor did set him strongly against this, saying justice must needs be done; whereas the King was much in favour of mercy, for that he was a young man, and asked for naught better than to save his life, as he was one of the gallants frequenting the Court, and M. de Cipierre<sup>1</sup> was keen in urging the same course. Yet was the hour of execution now drawing nigh, without aught being done,—to the astonishment of everybody.

Hereupon did M. de Nemours intervene, which loved the unhappy Baron, who had followed him gallantly on sundry fields of battle. The Duke went and threw himself at the Queen's feet, and did earnestly beseech her to give the poor gentleman his life, begging and praying so hard and pressing her so with his words as that the favour was e'en given him at the last. Then on the instant was sent a Captain of the Guard, which went and sought the man out and took him from the prison, just as he was being led forth to his doom. Thus was he saved, but in such fearful circumstances that a look of terror did remain ever after imprinted on his features, and he could never thereafter regain his colour, as myself have seen. I have heard tell how the same thing did happen to M. de Saint-Vallier, which did have a fine escape by the interest of M. de Bourbon.

Meantime however the widow was not idle, but did come next day to intercept the King as he was going to Mass, and did throw herself at his feet. She did present him her son, which might be three or four years old,

saying thus: "At the least, Sire, as you have given pardon to this child's murderer, I do beseech you grant the same to him now at this moment, for the time when he shall be grown up and shall have taken his vengeance and slain that wretch." And from that time onward, by what I have heard said, the mother would come every morning to awake her child; and showing him the bloody shirt his father had on when he was killed, would repeat to him three times over: "Mark this token, well, and bear well in mind, when you be grown up, to avenge this wrong; else do I disinherit you." A bitter spirit of revenge truly!

Myself when I was in Spain, did hear the tale how Antonio Roques, one of the most brave and valiant, cunning, cautious and skilful, famous and withal most courteous, bandits ever was in all Spain ('tis a matter of common knowledge), did in his early years desire to enter religion and be ordained priest. But the day being now come when he was to sing his first mass, just as he was coming forth from the vestry and was stepping with great ceremony toward the High Altar of his parish Church duly robed and accoutred to do his office, and chalice in hand, he did hear his mother saying to him as he passed her: *Ah! vellaco, vellaco, mejor seria de vengar la muerte de tu padre, que de cantar misa*,—"Ah! wretch and miscreant that you are! 'twere better far to avenge your father's death than to be singing Mass." This word did so touch him at heart, as that he doth coldly turn him about in mid progress, and back to the vestry, where he doth unrobe him, pretending his heart had failed him from indisposition, and that it should be for another time. Then off to the mountains to join the brigands,

among whom he doth presently win such esteem and renown that he was chose their chief; there he doth many crimes and thefts, and avengeth his father's death, which had been killed, some said, of a comrade, though others declared him a victim of the King's justice. This tale was told me by one that was a bandit himself, and had been under his orders in former days. This man did be-praise him to the third heaven; and true it is the Emperor Charles could never do him any hurt.

But to return once more to Madame de Nemours, the King did keep her in prison scarce any time, whereof was M. d'Escars in part the cause. He did soon release her, for to send her on a mission to the Ducs du Maine and de Nemours, and other Princes members of the League, bearing to all words of peace and oblivion of all past grievances:—dead men were dead, and there an end; best be good friends as aforetime. In fact, the King did take an oath of her, that she would faithfully perform this said embassy. Accordingly on her arrival, at first accost 'twas naught but tears and lamentations and regrets for all their losses; then anon did she make report of her instructions, whereto M. du Maine did reply, asking her if this were her own advice. She answered simply: "I have not come hither, my son, to advise you, but only to repeat to you the message I am charged withal and bidden give you. 'Tis for you to think whether you have sufficient cause to do so, and if your duty points that way. As to what I tell you, your heart and your conscience should give you the best advice. For myself, I do but discharge a commission I have promised to fulfil." Natheless, under the rose, she knew well enough how to stir the fire, which did long burn so fierce.



Many folks have wondered greatly, how the King, that was so wise and one of the most adroit men of his Kingdom, came to employ this lady for such an office, having so sorely injured her that she could have had neither heart nor feeling if she had taken therein the very least pains in the world; but there, she did simply make mock of him and his instructions. Report said at the time this was the fine advice of the Maréchal de Retz, who did give a like piece of counsel to King Charles, namely to send M. de la Noue into the town of La Rochelle, for to persuade the inhabitants to peace and their proper duty and allegiance. The better to accredit him to them, he did permit him to play the eager partisan on their side and on his own, to fight desperately for them, and give them counsel and advice against the King,—but all under this condition that when his services should be claimed by the King or the King's brother, which was his Lieutenant General, and he ordered to leave the place, he would obey. This he did and all else, making fierce enough war, and finally quitting the place; yet meanwhile he did so confirm his folk and sharpen their spirit, and did give them such excellent lessons and so greatly encouraged them, as that for that time they did cut our beards to rights for us. Many would have it, there was no subtlety in all this; but I did see it all with mine own eyes, and I do hope to give full account of these doings elsewhere. At any rate this was all the said Maréchal did avail his King and country; one that 'twere more natural surely to hold a charlatan and swindler than a good counsellor and a Marshal of France.

I will tell one other little word of the aforesaid Duchesse de Nemours. I have heard it said that at the time they

were framing the famous League, and she would be examining the papers and the lists of the towns which did join it, not yet seeing Paris figuring therein, she would ever say to her son: "All this is naught, my son; we must have Paris to boot. If you have not Paris, you have done naught; wherefore, ho! for Paris city." And never a word but Paris, Paris, was always in her mouth; and the end of it all was the barricades that were seen afterward.

## 8.

**I**N this we see how a brave heart doth ever fly at the highest game. And this doth again remind me of a little tale I have read in a Spanish Romance called *la Conquista de Navarra*, "The Conquest of Navarre."<sup>1</sup> This Kingdom having been taken and usurped from King John of Navarre by the King of Aragon, Louis XII. did send an army under M. de la Palice to win it back. Our King did send word to the Queen, Donna Catherine, by M. de la Palice which did bring her the news, that she should come to the Court of France and there tarry with his Queen Anne, while that the King, her husband, along with M de la Palice was making essay to recover the Kingdom. The Queen did make him this gallant answer: "How now, Sir! I did suppose the King your master had sent you hither for to carry me with you to my Kingdom and set me again at Pampeluna, and for me to accompany you thither, as my mind was made up to do and my preparations made. Yet now you bid me go stay at the Court of France? Truly a poor hope and ill augury for me! I see plainly

I shall never set foot in mine own land again." And even as she did presage, the thing fell out.

It was told and commanded the Duchess de Valentinois, on the approach of the death of King Henri II., when his health was now despaired of, to retire to her mansion in Paris, and go no more into his chamber,—to the end she might not disturb him in his pious meditations, and no less on account of the hostility certain did bear her. Then when she had so withdrawn, they did send to her again to demand sundry rings and jewels, which did belong to the Crown and which she must give back. At this she did on a sudden ask the worthy spokesman: "Why! is the King dead then?"—"No! Madam," replied the other, "but it can scarce be long first."—"As long as there is one breath of life left in his body, I would have my enemies to know I fear them not a whit, and that I will never obey them, so long as he shall be alive. My courage is still invincible. But when he is dead, I care not to live on after him, and all the vexations you could inflict on me would be but kindness compared with the bitterness of my loss. So, whether my King be quick or dead, I fear not mine enemies at all."

Herein did this fair lady show great spirit, and a true heart. Yet she did not die, 'twill be objected of some, as she did say she would. True! yet did she not fail to experience some threatenings of death; beside, she did better to choose rather to live than to die, for to show her enemies she was no wise afeared of them. Having erst seen them shake and tremble before her, she would fain escape doing the same before them, and did wish to show so good a face and confident look to them as that they never durst do her any displeasure. Nay! more than this;

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within two years' space they did seek to her more than ever, and renewed their friendship with her, as I did myself see. And this is the way with great lords and ladies, which have little solid continuance in their friendships, and in their differences do readily make it up again, like thieves at a fair, and the same with all their loves and hatreds. This we smaller folks do never do; for either we must needs fight, avenge and die, or else make up the quarrel by way of punctilious, minutely ordered and carefully arranged terms of agreement. So in this we do play the better part.

We cannot but admire this lady's conduct and behaviour; and truly these high-born dames which have to do with affairs of State, do commonly act in a grander way than the ordinary run of women. And this is why our late King Henri III., last deceased, and the Queen, his mother, did by no means love such ladies of their Court as did much trouble their wits with matters of State and put their nose therein and did concern them to speak of other matters near touching the government of the Kingdom. 'Twas as if, their Majesties were used to declare, they had some great part therein and might be heirs of the same, or just as if they had given the sweat of their bodies and force of their hands to its management and maintenance, like men; whereas, for a mere pastime, talking at the fireside, sitting comfortably in their chairs or lying on their pillows, or their daybeds, they would discourse at their ease of the world at large and the state of the Country, as if they did arrange it all. On this point a certain great lady of fashion, whom I will not name, did one time make a shrewd reply, who taking on her to say out all her say on occasion of the first meeting of the



Estates at Blois, their Majesties did cause a slight reprimand to be given her, telling her she should attend to the affairs of her own house and her prayers to God. To this being something too free in her speech, she did answer thus: "In days of yore when Princes, Kings and great Lords did take the cross and hie them over-seas, to do so noble exploits in the Holy Land, insooth 'twas allowed us women only to fast and pray, make orisons and vows, that God might give them a successful journey and a safe return. But nowadays that we do see them do naught better than ourselves, 'tis surely allowed us to speak of all matters; for as to praying God for them, why should we do so, seeing they do no more heroic deeds than ourselves?"

This speech was for sure too bold and outspoken, and indeed it came very nigh to costing her dear. She had all the difficulty in the world to win pardon and excuse, which she had to ask for right humbly; and had it not been for a certain private reason I could tell, and if I would, she had received dire pains and penalties therefor, and very signal punishment.

'Tis not always well to speak out a sharp saying such as this, when it cometh to the lips. Myself have seen not a few folk which could in no wise govern their wit in this sort, but were more untamed than a Barbary charger. Finding a good shrewd gibe in their mouth, out they must spit it, without sparing relations, friends or superiors. Many such I have known at our own Court of France, where they were well called *Marquis et Marquises de belle-bouche*, "Lords and Ladies of Frank Speech;" but many and many a time did their frank speech bring them in sore trouble.

## 9.



HAVING thus described the brave and gallant bearing of sundry ladies on sundry noble occasions of their life, I am fain now to give some examples of the like high qualities displayed at their death. Without borrowing any instance of Antiquity, I will merely adduce that of the late deceased Queen Regent <sup>1</sup> mother of our noble King Francis I. In her day this Princess, as I have heard many of mine acquaintance say, both men and women, was a very fair lady, and very gay and gallant to boot, which she did continue to be even in her declining years. And for this cause, when folk did talk to her of death, she did exceedingly mislike such discourse, not excepting preachers which did hold forth on this subject in their sermons. "As if," she would cry, "we did not all of us know well enough we must one day die. The fact is, these preachers, whenas they can find naught further to say in their sermons, and be at the end of their powers of invention, like other simple folk, do take refuge in this theme of death." The late Queen of Navarre, her daughter, did no less than her mother detest these same harpings on death and sermonizings on mortality.

Well, being now come near her fated end, and lying on her deathbed, three days before that event, she did see her chamber at night all lit up by a brilliant gleam shining in through the window. She did hereupon chide her bedchamber women, which were sitting up with her, asking them for why they did make so big and bright a fire. But they did answer, that there was but a small

fire burning, and that 'twas the moon which did shine so bright and cause the illumination. "Why!" she did exclaim, "there is no moon at this time of the month; it hath no business to be shining now." And of a sudden, bidding open her curtain, she did behold a comet, which shone right on her bed. "Ah, look!" she cried, "yonder is a sign which doth not appear for persons of common quality. God doth show it forth only for us great lords and ladies. Shut the window again; 'tis a comet, announcing my death; we must prepare therefor." So next morning, having sent to seek her confessor, she did perform all the duty of a good Christian, albeit the physicians did assure her she was not yet come to this. "Had I not seen the sign of my death," she said, "I should believe you, for indeed I do not feel me so far gone," and thereon did describe to them all the appearance of the comet. Finally, three days later, leaving all concerns of this world, she did pass away.

I cannot but believe but that great ladies, and such as be young, beautiful and high-born, do feel greater and more sore regret to leave this world than other women. Yet will I now name some such, which have made light of death, and have met the same with a good heart, though for the moment the announcement thereof was exceeding bitter and hateful to them. The late Comtesse de La Rochefoucault, of the house of Roye, in my opinion and that of many beside, one of the fairest and most charming women in all France, when her minister (for she was of the Reformed Faith, as everybody is aware) did warn her she must think no more of worldly things, and that her hour was now come, that she must presently away to God which was calling her, and leave all worldly vanities,

which were naught as compared with the blessedness of heaven, she said to him thus: "This is all very well, Sir Minister, to say to women which have no great contentment and pleasure in this world, and which have one foot in the grave already; but to me, that am no more than in the bloom of mine age and my delight in this world and my beauty, your sentence is exceeding bitter. And albeit I have more cause to hug myself in this world than in any other, and much reason to regret dying, yet would I fain show you my high courage herein, and do assure you I take my death with as good will as the most common, abject, low, foul old crone that ever was in this world." So presently, she did set her to sing psalms with much pious devotion, and so died.

Madame d'Espernon, of the house of Candale, was attacked of so sudden and deadly a malady as that she was carried off in less than a week. Before her death, she did essay all remedies which might cure her, imploring the help of men and of God in most fervent prayers, as well as of all her friends, and her retainers male and female, taking it very hard that she was to die so young. But when they did reason with her and inform her she must verily and indeed quit this world, and that no remedy was of any avail: "Is it true?" she said; "leave me alone then, I will make up my mind to bear it bravely." These were the exact words she used. Then lifting up her two soft, white arms, and laying her two hands one against the other, with an open look and a confident spirit, she made her ready to wait death with all patience, and to leave this world, which she did proceed to abjure in very pious and Christian terms. Thus did she die as a devout and good Christian should, at the age of twenty-six, being



one of the handsomest and most charming women of her time.

'Tis not right, they say, to praise one's own belongings; on the other hand what is at once good and true should not be kept hid. This is why I am fain in this place to commend Madame d'Aubeterre,<sup>2</sup> mine own niece and daughter of my elder brother, who as all they that have seen her at Court or elsewhere will go with me in saying, was one of the fairest and most perfect ladies you could see, as well in body as in mind. The former did plainly and externally show forth its excellence in her handsome and charming face, her graceful figure, and all her sweet mien and bearing; while for the mind, 'twas divinely gifted and ignorant of naught it were meet to know. Her discourse was very fit, simple and unadorned, and did flow right smoothly and agreeably from her lips, whether in serious converse or in merry interchange of wit. No woman have I ever seen which, in my opinion, did more resemble our Queen Marguerite of France, as well in her general air as in her special charms; and I did once hear the Queen Mother say the same. To say this is by itself commendation enough, so I will add no more; none which have ever seen her, will, I am well assured, give me the lie as to this. Of a sudden it befell this lady to be attacked by a malady, which the physicians did fail to recognize rightly, merely wasting their Latin in the attempt. Herself, however, did believe she had been poisoned; though I will not say in what quarter. Still God will avenge all, and mayhap the guilty in this matter will yet be punished. She did all she could in the way of remedies,—though not, she did declare, because she was afeared of dying. For since her husband's death, she had lost all fear of this, albeit

he was for sure in no wise her equal in merit, nor deserving of her or of the tender tears her fair eyes did shed after his death. Yet would she have been right glad to live on a while longer for the love of her daughter, the which she was leaving a tender slip of a girl. This last was a good and excellent reason, while regrets for an husband that was both foolish and vexatious are surely but vain and idle.

Thus she, seeing now no remedy was of avail, and feeling her own pulse, which she did herself try and find to be galloping fast (for she had understanding of all such matters), two days before she died, did send to summon her daughter,<sup>8</sup> and did make her a very good and pious exhortation, such as no other mother mayhap that I know of could have made a finer one or one better expressed,—at once instructing her how to live in this world and how to win the grace of God in the next; this ended, she did give her her blessing, bidding her no more trouble with her tears the sweet easefulness and repose she was about to enjoy with God. Presently she did ask for her mirror, and looking at herself very fixedly therein, did exclaim, “Ah! traitor face, that doth in no wise declare my sickness (for indeed ’twas as fair to look on as ever), thou art yet unchanged; but very soon death, which is drawing nigh, will have the better of thy beauty, which shall rot away and be devoured of worms.” Moreover she had put the most part of her rings on her fingers; and gazing on these, and her hand withal, which was very well shaped: “Lo! a vanity I have much loved in days gone-by; yet now I do quit the same willingly, to bedeck me in the other world with another much fairer adornment.”

Then seeing her sisters weeping their eyes out at her bedside, she did comfort them, exhorting them to take in

good part, as she did, what God was pleased to send her, and saying that as they had always loved each other so well, they should not grieve at that which did bring her only joy and contentment. She did further tell them that the fond friendship she had ever borne them should be eternal, beseeching them to return her the like, and above all to extend it to her child. Presently seeing them but weep the harder at this, she said once more: "Sisters mine, an if ye do love me, why do ye not rejoice with me over the exchange I make of a wretched life for one most happy? My soul, wearied of so many troubles, doth long to be free, and to be in blessed rest with Jesus Christ my Saviour. Yet you would fain have it still tied to this miserable body, which is but its prison, not its domicile. I do beseech you, therefore, my sisters, torment yourselves no more."

Many other the like words did she prefer, so pious and Christian as that there is never a Divine, however great could have uttered better or more blessed,—all which I do pass over. In especial she did often ask to see Madame de Bourdeille, her mother, whom she had prayed her sisters to send fetch, and kept saying to them: "Oh! sisters, is not Madame de Bourdeille coming yet? Oh! how slow your couriers be! they be really not fit to ride post and make special speed." Her mother did at last arrive, but never saw her alive, for she had died an hour before.

She did ask earnestly too for me, whom she ever spake of as her dear uncle, and did send us her last farewell. She did beg them to have her body opened after death, a thing she had always strongly abhorred, to the end, as she said to her sisters, that the cause of her death being more evidently discovered, this should enable them and her

daughter the better to take precautions and so preserve their lives. "For I must admit," she said, "a suspicion that I was poisoned five years ago along with mine uncle de Brantôme and my sister the Comtesse de Durtal; but I did get the biggest piece. Yet would I willingly charge no one with such a crime, for fear it should prove a false accusation and my soul be weighted with the guilt thereof, —my soul which I do earnestly desire may be free of all blame, rancour, ill-will and sinfulness, that it may fly straight to God its Creator."

I should never have done, if I were to repeat all; for her discourse was full and long, and such as did show no sign at all of an outwearied body or a weak and failing spirit. As to this, there was a certain gentleman, her neighbour, a witty talker and one she had loved to converse and jest withal, who did present himself and to whom she said: "Ha, ha! good friend! needs must give in this fall, tongue and sword and all. So, fare you well!"

Her physician and her sisters did wish her to take some cordial medicine or other; but she begged them not to give it her, "for these would merely," she said, "be helping to prolong my pain and put off my final rest." So she did ask them to leave her alone; and was again and again heard to say: "Dear God! how gentle sweet is death! who had ever dreamed it could be so?" Then, little by little, yielding up her spirit very softly, she did close her eyes, without making any of those hideous and fearsome signs that death doth show in many at the supreme moment.

Madame de Bourdeille, her mother, was not long in following her. For the melancholy she did conceive at the death of this her noble daughter did carry her off in



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eighteen months, after a sickness lasting seven months, at one time giving cause for good hope of recovery, at another seeming desperate. But from the very first, herself did declare she would never get the better of it, in no wise fearing death, and never praying God to grant her life and health, but only patience in her sufferings and above that He would send her a peaceful death, and one neither painful nor long drawn out. And so it befell; for while we deemed her only fainted, she did give up her soul so gently as that she was never seen to move either foot or arm or limb, nor give any fearful and hideous look; but casting a glance around with eyes that were as fair as ever, she passed away, remaining as beautiful in death as she had been when alive and in the plenitude of her charms.

A sore pity, verily, of her and of all fair ladies that die so in the bloom of their years! Only I do believe this, that Heaven, not content with those fair lights which from the creation of the world do adorn its vault, is fain, beside these, to have yet other new stars to still illumine us, as erst they did when alive, with their beauteous eyes.

Another example, and then an end:

You have seen in these last days the case of Madame de Balagny, true sister in all ways of the gallant Bussy. When Cambrai was besieged, she did all ever she could, of her brave and noble heart, to prevent its being taken; but after having in vain exhausted herself in every sort of defensive means she could contrive, and seeing now 'twas all over and the town already in the enemy's power, and the citadel soon to go the same road, unable to endure the smart and heart's pang of evacuating her Principality

(for her husband and herself had gotten themselves to be called Prince and Princess of Cambrai and Cambrésis,—a title sundry nations did find odious and much too presumptuous, seeing their rank was but that of plain gentlefolk), did die of grief and so perished at the post of honour. Some say she did die by her own hand, an act deemed however more Pagan than Christian. Be this as it may, she deserveth but praise for her gallantry and bravery in all this, and for the rebuke she did administer her husband at the time of her death, when she thus said to him: “How can you endure, Balagny, to live on after your most dismal fall of Fortune, to be a spectacle and laughing stock to all the world, which will point the finger of scorn at you, thus falling from great glory whereto you had been elevated to the low place I see awaiting you, and if you follow not my example? Learn then of me to die nobly, and not survive your misfortunes and disgrace.” ’Tis a grand thing thus to see a woman teaching us how to live,—and how to die. Yet would he neither obey nor believe her; but at the end of seven or eight months, quick forgetting the memory of this gallant lady, he did re-wed with the sister of Madame de Monceaux,<sup>4</sup> no doubt a fair and honourable damosel,—manifesting to all and sundry how that to keep alive was his one thing needful, be it on what terms it may.

Of a surety life is good and sweet; natheless is a noble death greatly to be commended, such as was this lady’s, who dying as she did of grief, doth appear of a contrary complexion to that of some women, which are said to be of an opposite nature to men, for that they do die of joy and in joy.

## 10.



F this sort of death I will allege only the instance of Mlle. de Limueil, the elder, which did die at Court, being one of the Queen's maids of honour. All through her sickness, whereof she died, her tongue did never leave off wagging, but she did talk continuously; for she was a very great chatterbox, a sayer of very witty and telling scoffs, and a very fine woman withal. When the hour of her death was come, she did summon her chamber valet to her; for each maid of honour hath her own. He was called Julian, and did play excellently on the violin. "Julian," saith she to him, "come take your violin and go on playing me the *Défaite des Suisses* (Switzers' Rout)<sup>1</sup> till I be dead, and play it as well as ever you can; and when you come to the words, *Tout est perdu* ("All is lost"), play the passage over four or five times as pathetically as you may." This the other did, while she joined in with her voice; and when 'twas come to *Tout est perdue*, she did repeat it over twice. Then turning to the other side of the bed, she cried to her friends: "Yes! all is lost this bout, and for good and all," and so died. Truly a death we may call gay and pleasant! This tale I have of two of her companions, persons of credit, who saw the mystery played out.

If then there be women which do die of joy and in joyous wise, no less are men to be found which have done the like. Thus we read of that great Pope, Leo X., how he did die of joy and delight, when he beheld us Frenchmen driven out altogether from the State of Milan; so sore a hate he bare us!

The late Grand Prior, M. de Lorraine, did one time conceive the wish to send a pair of his Galleys on an expedition to the Levant under the command of Captain Beaulieu, one of his Lieutenants, of the which I have spoke somewhat in another place. Beaulieu went readily enough, being a brave and valiant sailor. When he was toward the Archipelago, he did fall in with a great Venetian ship, well armed and well found, which he set him to fire upon. But the ship did return his salute to some purpose; for at the first volley she did carry clean away two of his banks of oars, galley-slaves and all. Amongst other sore wounded was his Lieutenant, a man named Captain Panier ("Basket") and a good fellow enough, which had time to cry out this word only before he died: "Good-bye baskets all, the harvest is done,"—a merry and a pleasant jest to enliven his death withal! The end was, M. de Beaulieu had to retire, this big ship proving beyond his power to overcome.

The first year King Charles IX. was King, at the time of the July edict when he was yet residing in the Faubourg St. Germain, we did see the hanging of a certain gallows-bird in that quarter, which had stolen six silver goblets from the kitchen of the Prince de La Roche-sur-Yonne. So soon as he was on the ladder, he did beg the hangman to grant him a little space for a dying speech, and did take up his parable, remonstrating with the folk and telling them he was unjustly put to death, "for never," said he, "have I practised my thievings on the poor, on beggars and the vulgar herd, but only on Princes and great Lords, which be greater thieves than we, and do rob us every day of their lives; and 'tis a good deed to recover again of these folk what they do rob and filch from us." Much



more diverting nonsense of the sort he did utter, the which 'twere but wasted time to repeat. Presently the priest which was with him at the top of the ladder, turning to the people, as we see done, did call upon them: "Good sirs! this poor criminal doth recommend himself to your prayers; we will say all together for him and his soul's peace a *Pater noster* and an *Ave Maria*, and will sing a *Salve*." Then just as the folk were answering, the said poor criminal did drop his head, and fixing his eyes on the priest, did start bellowing like a calf, and making mock of the priest in the most absurd fashion; then lending him a kick, did send him flying from the top of the ladder to the bottom, so big a leap that he brake a leg. "Ah, ha! Sir priest!" cried the fellow, "God's truth, I knew I should shift you. Well! you've got your gruel now, my fine fellow." Hearing him groan, he did set up a loud and hearty guffaw; then this ended, did jump off the ladder of his own motion and set himself a-swinging into space. I dare swear the Court did laugh merrily at the trick, albeit the poor priest had done himself a serious hurt. A death, in good sooth, that can scarce be called grave and melancholy!

The late deceased M. d'Estampes had a fool called Colin, a very diverting fellow. When his death was now nigh, his master did enquire how Colin was doing. They told him, "But poorly, my Lord; he is going to die, for he will take nothing."—"Come now," said M. d'Estampes, who was at the moment at table, "take him this soup, and tell him, an if he will not take somewhat for love of me, I will never love him more, for they inform me he will take naught." The message was delivered to Colin, who, death already 'twixt the teeth of him, did make

answer, "And who be they which have told my Lord I would take naught?" Then being surrounded by a countless cloud of flies (for 'twas summer time), he began to hunt them with his hand, as we see pages and lackeys and children do, a-trying to catch them; and having taken two with one swoop, he cried, making a funny gesture more readily imagined than described, "Go tell my Lord," said he, "what I have taken for love of him, and that now I'm away to the kingdom of the flies," and so saying and turning him round to the other side of the bed, the merry rascal did expire.

As to this, I have heard sundry philosophers declare that folk do very often at the moment of death remember them of those things they have the most loved in life, and tell of these; so gentlemen, soldiers, sportsmen, artisans, all in fact, very near, according to their former occupation, do say some word thereof when a-dying. This is a fact often noted no less in past time than at the present day.

Women in like wise do often out with a similar rigma-role,—whores just as much as honest dames. So have I heard speak of a certain lady, of very good quality too, which on her death-bed did exult to spit out all about her divers intrigues, naughtinesses and past pleasures, to such purpose that she told more thereof than ever folk had known before, albeit she had always been suspected as a desperate wanton. This revelation she may have made, either in a dream possibly, or else because truth, that can never be hid, did constrain her thereto, or mayhap because she was fain so to discharge her conscience. Anyhow, she did actually, with clear conscience and true repentance, confess and ask forgiveness for her sins, detail-

ing them each and all, dotting i's and crossing t's, till all was as clear as day. Verily, a curious thing, she should have found leisure at that supreme hour so to be sweeping her conscience clean of such a muckheap of scandal,—and with such careful particularity.

Another good lady I have heard of which was so apt to dream every night, as that she would tell out by night everything she did by day, in such wise that she did bring sore suspicion of herself on her husband's part, who did presently set himself to listen to her talking and prattling and pay heed to her dreams, whereby an ill fate did later on befall her.

'Tis no long while since a gentleman of the great world, belonging to a province I will not name, did the same thing on his death-bed, publishing abroad his loves and lecheries, and specifying the ladies, wives and maids, which he had had to do with, and in what places, and how and under what circumstances. All this he did confess loud out, asking God's pardon therefor before everybody. This last did worse than the woman just mentioned, for whereas she did bring disrepute on herself only, he did blacken several fair ladies' good name. A fine pair of gallants truly!

'Tis said that misers, both male and female, have likewise this trick of thinking much, in the hour of death, on their hoard of crowns, forever talking of the same. Some forty years ago there was a certain lady of Mortemar, one of the richest ladies in all Poitou and one of the most moneyed, which afterward when she came to die had never a thought for aught but her crowns that were in her closet. All the time of her sickness, she would rise from her bed twenty times a day to go visit her treasure. At

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## LIVES OF FAIR AND GALLANT LADIES

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the last, when she was now very nigh her end and the priest was exhorting her to think of the life eternal, she would make no other reply nor say any other word but only this: "Give me my gown; the villains are robbing me." Her one thought was to rise and visit her strong-room, as she did sore strive to do, but the effort was beyond the poor lady. And so she died.

I have let myself toward the end wander a little away from the first intention of my present Discourse; but we should bear in mind that after preaching and tragedy, farce ever cometh next. With this word, I make an end.





## SIXTH DISCOURSE

Of how we should never speak ill of ladies, and of the consequences of so doing.

### 1.



NE point there is to be noted in these fair and honourable dames which do indulge in love, to wit that whatsoever freedom they do allow themselves, they will never willingly suffer offence or scandal to be said of them by others, and if any do say ill of them, they know very well how to avenge the affront sooner or later. In a word, they be ready enough to do the thing, but unwilling it should be spoken about. And in very sooth 'tis not well done to bring ill repute on an honourable lady, nor to divulge on her; for indeed what have a number of other folks to do with it, an if they *do* please their senses and their lovers' to boot?

The Courts of our French Kings, and amongst others, those of later years in especial, have been greatly given to blazon abroad the faults of these worthy dames; and I have known the days when was never a gallant about the Palace but did discover some falsehood to tell against the ladies, or at least find some true though scandalous tale to repeat. All this is very blameworthy; for a man

ought never to offend the honour of fair ladies, and least of all great ladies. And I do say this as well to such as do reap enjoyment of ladies' favour, as to them which cannot taste the venison, and for this cause do decry the same.

The Courts of our later Kings have, I repeat it, been overmuch given to this scandal-mongering and tale-bearing,—herein differing widely from those of earlier Sovereigns, their predecessors, always excepting that of Louis XI., that seasoned reprobate. Of him 'tis said that most times he would eat at a common table, in open Hall, with many gentlemen of his privy household and others withal; and whoever could tell him the best and most lecherous story of light women and their doings, this man was best welcomed and made most of. Himself, too, showed no scruple to do the like, for he was exceeding inquisitive and loved to be informed of all secrets; then having found these out, he would often divulge the same to companions, and that publicly.<sup>1</sup> This was indeed a very grave scandal. He had a most ill opinion of women, and an entire disbelief in their chastity. After inviting the King of England to Paris on a visit of good fellowship, and being taken at his word by that Prince, he did straight repent him, and invented an *alibi* to break off the engagement. "Holy Christ!" he said on this occasion, "I don't want him coming here. He would certainly find some little smart, dainty minx, that he would fall over head and ears in love with, who would tempt him to stay longer and come oftener than I should at all like."

Natheless of his wife<sup>2</sup> he had a very high opinion, who was a very modest and virtuous lady; and truly she had need be so, for else, being a distrustful and suspicious

Prince if ever there was one, he would very soon have treated her like the rest. And when he died, he did charge his son to love and honour his mother well, but not to be ruled of her,—“not that she was not both wise and chaste,” he declared, “but that she was more Burgundian than French.” And indeed he did never really love her but to have an heir of her; and when he had gotten this, he made scarce nay account of her more. He kept her at the Castle of Amboise like a plain Gentlewoman in very scanty state and as ill-dressed as any young country girl. There he would leave her with few attendants to say her prayers, while himself was away travelling and taking his pleasure elsewhere. I leave you to imagine, such being the opinion the King held of women, and such his delight in speaking ill of them, how they were maltreated by every evil tongue at Court. Not that he did otherwise wish them ill for so taking their pleasure, nor that he desired to stop their amusements at all, as I have seen some fain to do; but his chiefest joy was to gird at them, the effect being that these poor ladies, weighed down under such a load of detraction, were often hindered from kicking of their heels so freely as they would else have liked to do. Yet did harlotry much prevail in his day; for the King himself did greatly help to establish and keep up the same with the gentlemen of his Court. Then was the only question, who could make the merriest mock thereat, whether in public or in privy, and who could tell the merriest tales of the ladies’ wantonings and *wriggles* (this was his phrase) and general naughtiness. True it is the names of great ladies were left unmentioned, such being censured only by guess-work and appearances; and I ween they had a better time than some I have seen in the days of

the late King, which did torment and chide and bully them most strangely. Such is the account I have heard of that good monarch, Louis XI., from divers old stagers.

At any rate his son, King Charles VIII., which did succeed him, was not of this complexion; for 'tis reported of him now that he was the most reticent and fair-speaking monarch was even seen, and did never offend man or woman by the very smallest ill word. I leave you then to think of the fair ladies of his reign, and all merry lovers of the sex, did not have good times in those days. And indeed he did love them right well and faithfully,—in fact too well; for returning back from his Naples expedition triumphant and victorious, he did find such excessive diversion in loving and fondling the same, and pleasuring them with so many delights at Lyons, in the way of tournaments and tourneys which he did hold for love of them, that clean forgetting his partisans which he had left in that Kingdom, he did leave these to perish,—and towns and kingdom and castles to boot, which yet held out, and were stretching forth hands of supplication to him to send them succour. 'Tis said moreover that overmuch devotion to the ladies was the cause of his death, for by reason of a too reckless abandonment to these pleasures, he did, being of a very weakly frame of body, so enervate and undermine his health as that this behaviour did no little contribute to his death.

Our good King Louis XII. was very respectful toward the ladies; for as I have said in another place, he would ever pardon all stage-players, as well as scholars and clerks of the Palace in their guilds, no matter who they did make free to speak of, excepting the Queen his wife, and her ladies and damosels,—albeit he was a merry



gallant in his day and did love fair women as well as other folk. Herein he did take after his grand-father, Duke Louis of Orleans,—though not in this latter's ill tongue and inordinate conceit and boastfulness. And truly this defect did cost him his life, for one day having boasted loud out at a banquet whereat Duke John of Burgundy, his cousin, was present, how that he had in his private closet portraits of all the fairest ladies he had enjoyed, as chance would have it, Duke John himself did enter this same closet. The very first lady whose picture he beheld there, and the first sight that met his eyes, was his own most noble lady wife, which was at that day held in high esteem for her beauty. She was called Marguerite, daughter of Albert of Bavaria, Count of Hainault and Zealand. Who was amazed then? who but the worthy husband? Fancy him muttering low down to himself, "Ha, ha! I see it all!" However, making no outcry about the flea that really bit him, he did hide it all, though hatching vengeance, be sure, for a later day, and so picked a quarrel with him as to his regency and administration of the Kingdom. Thus putting off his grievance on this cause and not on any matter of his wife at all, he had the Duke assassinated at the Porte Barbette of Paris. Then presently his first wife being now dead (we may suspect by poison), and right soon after, he did wed in the second place the daughter of Louis, third Duke of Bourbon. Mayhap this bargain was no better than his first; for truly with folks which be meet for horns, change bed-chamber and quarters as they may, they will ever encounter the same.

The Duke in this matter did very wisely, so to avenge him of his adultery without setting tongues a-wagging

of his concerns or his wife's, and 'twas a judicious piece of dissimulation on his part. Indeed I have heard a very great nobleman and soldier say, how that there be three things a wise man ought never to make public, an if he be wronged therein. Rather should he hold his tongue on the matter, or better still invent some other pretext to fight upon and get his revenge,—unless that is the thing was so clear and manifest, and so public to many persons, as that he could not possibly put off his action onto any other motive but the true one.

The first is, when 'tis brought up against a man that he is cuckold and his wife unfaithful; another, when he is taxed with buggery and sodomy; the third, when 'tis stated of him that he is a coward, and that he hath basely run away from a fight or a battle. All three charges be most shameful, when a man's name is mentioned in connection therewith; so he doth fight the accusation, and will sometimes suppose he can well clear himself and prove his name to have been falsely smirched. But the matter being thus made public, doth cause only the greater scandal; and the more 'tis stirred, the more doth it stink, exactly as vile stench waxeth worse, the more it is disturbed. And this is why 'tis always best, if a man can with honour, to hold his tongue, and contrive and invent some new motive to account for his punishment of the old offence; for such like grievances should ever be ignored so far as may be, and never brought into court, or made subjects of discussion or contention. Many examples could I bring of this truth; but 'twould be over irksome to me, and would unduly lengthen out my Discourse.

So we see Duke John was very wise and prudent thus to dissimulate and hide his horns, and on quite other grounds

take his revenge on his cousin, which had shamed him. Else had he been made mock of, and his name blazoned abroad. No doubt dread of such mockery and scandal did touch him as nigh at heart as ever his ambition, and made him act like the wise and experienced man of the world he was.

Now, however, to return from the digression which hath delayed me, our King Francis I., who was a good lover of fair ladies, and that in spite of the opinion he did express, as I have said elsewhere, how that they were fickle and inconstant creatures, would never have the same ill spoke of at his Court, and was always most anxious they should be held in all high respect and honour. I have heard it related how that one time, when he was spending his Lent at Meudon near Paris, there was one of the gentlemen in his service there named the Sieur de Brizambourg, of Saintogne. As this gentleman was serving the King with meat, he having a dispensation to eat thereof, his master bade him carry the rest, as we see sometimes done at Court, to the ladies of the privy company, whose names I had rather not give, for fear of offence. The gentleman in question did take upon him to say, among his comrades and others of the Court, how that these ladies not content with eating of raw meat in Lent, were now eating cooked as well,—and their belly full. The ladies hearing of it, did promptly make complaint to the King, which thereupon was filled with so great an anger, as that he did instantly command the archers of the Palace guard to take the man and hang him out of hand. By lucky chance the poor gentleman had wind of what was a-foot from one of his friends, and so fled and escaped in the nick of time. But an if he had been caught, he would



most certainly have been hanged, albeit he was a man of good quality, so sore was the King seen to be wroth that time, and little like to go back on his word. I have this anecdote of a person of honour and credibility which was present; and at the time the King did say right out, that any man which should offend the honour of ladies, the same should be hanged without benefit of clergy.

A little while before, Pope Farnese being come to Nice, and the King paying him his respects in state with all his Court and Lords and Ladies, there were some of these last, and not the least fair of the company, which did go to the Pope for to kiss his slipper. Whereupon a gentleman did take on him to say they had gone to beg his Holiness for a dispensation to taste of raw flesh without sin or shame, whenever and as much as ever they might desire. The King got to know thereof; and well it was for the gentleman he did fly smartly, else had he been hanged, as well for the veneration due to the Pope as for the respect proper to fair ladies.

## 2.



THESE gentlemen were not so happy in their speeches and interviews as was once the late deceased M. d'Albanie. The time when Pope Clement did visit Marseilles to celebrate the marriage of his niece with M. d'Orleans, there were three widow ladies, of fair face and honourable birth, which by reason of the pains, vexations and griefs they suffered from the absence of their late husbands and of those pleasures that were no more, had come so low, and grown so thin, weak and sickly, as that they did beseech M. d'Al-



banie, their kinsman, who did possess a good share of the Pope's favour, to ask of him dispensation for the three of them to eat meat on prohibited days. This the said Duke did promise them to do, and to that end did one day bring them on a friendly footing to the Pope's lodging. Meantime he had warned the King of what was a-foot, telling him he would afford him some sport. So having put him up to the game, and the three ladies being on their knees before his Holiness, M. d'Albanie took the word first, saying in a low tone and in Italian, so that the ladies did not catch his words: "Holy Father, see here before you three widow ladies, fair to look on and very well born. These same for the respect they bear toward their dead husbands and the love they have for the children they have borne to these, will not for aught in all the world marry again and so wrong their husbands and children. But whereas they be sometimes sore tempted by the pricks of the flesh, they do therefore humbly beseech your Holiness for leave to go with men without marriage, whenever and wherever they shall find them under the said temptation." —"What say you, cousin?" cried the Pope. "Why! 'twould be against God's own commandments, wherefrom I can give no dispensation." "Well! the ladies are here before you, Holy Father, and if it please you to hear them say their say." At this one of the three, taking the word, said: "Holy Father! we have besought M. d'Albanie to make you our very humble petition for us three poor women, and to represent to your Holiness our frailty and our weakly complexion."—"Nay! my daughters," replied the Pope, "but your petition is in no wise reasonable, for the thing would be clean against God's commandments." Then the widows, still quite ignorant of what M. d'Albanie

had told the Pope, made answer: "At the least, Holy Father, may it please you give us leave three times a week, without scandal to our name."—"What!" exclaimed the Pope, "give you leave to commit *il peccato di lussuria* (the sin of lasciviousness?). I should damn mine own soul; I cannot do it!" Hereupon the three ladies, perceiving at last 'twas a case of scampishness and knavery, and that M. d'Albanie had played a trick on them, declared, "'Tis not of that we speak, Holy Father; we but ask permission to eat meat on prohibited days."—Hearing these words, the Duc d'Albanie told them, "Nay! I thought 'twas live flesh you meant, ladies!" The Pope was quick to understand the knavery put on them, and said with a dawning smile, "You have put these noble ladies to the blush, my cousin; the Queen will be angered when she doth hear of it." The Queen did hear of it anon, but made no ado, and found the tale diverting. The King likewise did afterward make good mirth thereof with the Pope; while the Holy Father himself, after giving them his benediction, did grant them the dispensation they craved, and dismissed them well content.

I have been given the names of the three ladies concerned, namely: Madame de Chasteau-Briant or Madame de Canaples, Madame de Chastillon and the Baillive de Caen, all three very honourable ladies. I have the tale from sundry old frequenters of the Court.

Madame d'Uzès<sup>1</sup> did yet better, at the time when Pope Paul III. came to Nice to visit King Francis. She was then Madame du Bellay, and a lady which hath from her youth up always had merry ways and spake many a witty word. One day, prostrating herself at his Holiness' feet, she did make three supplications to him: first, that he

grant her absolution, for that when yet a little maid, in waiting on the Queen Regent's majesty, and called by the name of Tallard, she did lose her scissors while sewing of her seam, and did make a vow to St. Allivergot to perform the same, an if she found them. This she presently did, yet did never accomplish her vow, not knowing where the said Saint's body lay. The second petition was that he give her pardon forasmuch as, when Pope Clement came to Marseilles, she being still Mlle. Tallard, she did take one of the pillows of his Holiness' bed, and did wipe herself therewith in front and in rear, on the which his Holiness did afterward rest his noble head and face. The third was this, that the Sieur de Tays, because she did love the same, but he loved not her, and the man is accursed and should be excommunicated which loveth not again, if he be loved.

The Pope at first was sore astonished at these requests, but having enquired of the King who she was, did learn her witty ways, and laughed heartily over the matter with the King. Yet from that day forth all she did was found admirable, so good a grace did she display in all her ways and words.

Now never suppose this same great monarch was so strict and stern in his respect for ladies, as that he did not relish well enough any good stories told him concerning them, without however any scandal-mongering or decrying of their good name. Rather like the great and highly privileged King he was, he would not that every man, and all the vulgar herd, should enjoy like privileges with himself.

I have heard sundry relate how he was ever most anxious that the noble gentlemen of his Court should never be



without mistresses. If they won none such, he did deem them simpletons and empty fools; while many a time he would ask one Courtier or another the name of the lady of his choice, and promise to do them good service in that quarter, and speak well of their merits. So good-natured a Prince was he and an affable. Oftentimes too, when he did observe his gentlemen full of free discourse with their mistresses, he would come up and accost them, asking what merry and gallant words they were exchanging with their ladies, and if he found the same not to his liking, correcting them and teaching them better. With his most intimate friends, he was no wise shy or sparing to tell his stories and share his good things with them. One diverting tale I have heard him tell, which did happen to himself, and which he did later on repeat. This was of a certain young and pretty lady new come to Court, the which being little skilled in the ways of the world, did very readily yield to the persuasions of the great folks, and in especial those of the said monarch himself. One day when he was fain to erect his noble standard and plant the same in her fort, she having heard it said, and indeed begun to note that when one gave a thing to the King, or took aught from him and touched it, the person must first kiss the hand for to take and touch it withal, did herself without more ado fulfil the obligation and first very humbly kissing her hand did seize the King's standard and plant it in the fort with all due humbleness. Then did she ask him in cold blood, how he did prefer her to love him, as a respectable and modest lady, or as a wanton. No doubt he did ask her for the latter, for herein was she more able to show herself more agreeable than as a modest woman. And indeed he soon found out she had by no



means wasted her time, both after the event and before it, and all. When all was done, she would drop him a deep curtsy, thanking him respectfully for the honour he had done her, whereof she was all unworthy, often suggesting to him at the same time some promotion for her husband. I have heard the lady's name, one which hath since grown much less simple than at first she was, and is nowadays cunning and experienced enough. The King made no ado about repeating the tale, which did reach the ears of not a few folks.

This monarch was exceeding curious to hear of the love of both men and women, and above all their amorous engagements, and in especial what fine airs the ladies did exhibit when at their gentle work, and what looks and attitudes they did display therein, and what words they said. On hearing all this, he would laugh frank and free, but after would forbid all publishing abroad thereof and any scandal making, always strongly recommending an honourable secrecy on these matters.

He had for his good follower herein that great, most magnificent and most generous nobleman, the Cardinal de Lorraine. Most generous I may well call him, for he had not his like in his day; his free expenditure, his many gracious gifts and kindnesses, did all bear witness thereof, and above all else his charity toward the poor. He would regularly bear with him a great game-bag, the which his valet of the bed-chamber, who did govern his petty cash, never failed to replenish, every morning, with three or four hundred crowns. And as many poor folk as he met, he would plunge his hand in the game-bag, and whatsoever he drew out therefrom, without a moment's thought, he gave away, and without any picking or choosing. 'Twas

of him a poor blind man, as the Cardinal was passing in the streets of Rome and was asked for an alms, and so did throw him according to wont a great handful of gold, said thus, crying out aloud in the Italian tongue: *O tu sei Christo, o veramente el cardinal di Lorrena*,—"Either you are Christ, or the Cardinal de Lorraine." Moreover if he was generous and charitable in this way, he was no less liberal toward other folks as well, and chiefly where fair ladies were concerned, whom he did easily attach to him by this regale. For money was not so greatly abundant in those days as it hath nowadays become, and for this cause women were more eager after the same, and every sort of merry living and gay attire.

I have heard it said that ever on the arrival at Court of any fair damsel or young wife that was handsome and attractive, he would come instantly to greet the same, and discoursing with her would presently offer to undertake the training of her. A pretty trainer for sooth! I ween the task was not so irksome an one as to train and break some wild colt. Accordingly 'twas said at that time, was scarce dame or damsel resident at Court or newly come thither, but was caught and debauched by dint of her own avariciousness and the largesse of the aforesaid Cardinal; and few or none have come forth of that Court women of chastity and virtue. Thus might their chests and big wardrobes be seen for that time more full of gowns and petticoats, of cloth of gold and silver and of silk, than be nowadays those of our Queens and great Princesses of the present time. I know this well, having seen the thing with mine own eyes in two or three instances,—fair ladies which had gotten all this gear by their dainty body; for

neither father, mother nor husband could have given them the same in anything like such wealth and abundance.

Nay! but I should have refrained me, some will say, from stating so much of the great Cardinal, in view of his honoured cloth and most reverend and high estate. Well! his King would have it so, and did find pleasure therein; and pleasure one's Sovereign, a man is dispensed of all scruple, whether in making love or other matters, provided always they be not dishonourable. Accordingly he did make no ado about going to the wars, and hunting and dancing, taking part in mascarades, and the like sports and pastimes. Moreover he was a man of like flesh and blood with other folk, and did possess many great merits and perfections of his own, enough surely to outweigh and cloak this small fault,—if fault it is to be called, to love fair ladies!

I have heard the following tale told of him in connection with the proper respect due to ladies. He was naturally most courteous toward them; yet did he once forget his usual practice, and not without reason enough, with the Duchess of Savoy, Donna Beatrix of Portugal. Traveling on one occasion through Piedmont, on his way to Rome on his Royal master's service, he did visit the Duke and Duchess. After having conversed a sufficient while with the Duke, he went to find the noble Duchess in her chamber for to pay his respects to her; arrived there and on his coming forward toward her, her Grace, who was haughtiness itself, if ever was such in the world, did offer him her hand to kiss. The Cardinal, loath to put up with this affront, did press forward to kiss her on the mouth, while she did draw back all she could. Then losing all patience and crowding up yet nearer to her, he takes

her fairly by the head, and in spite of her struggles did kiss her two or three times over. And albeit she did protest sore with many cries and exclamations both in Portuguese and Spanish, yet had she to endure this treatment. "What!" the Cardinal cried out; "is it to me this sort of state and ceremony is to be used? I do kiss right enough the Queen of France my Mistress, which is the greatest Queen in all the world, and I am not to kiss you, a dirty little slip of a duchess! I would have you to know I have bedded with ladies as fair as you, and as good to boot, and of better birth than ever you be." And mayhap he spoke but the truth. Anyway the Princess was ill-advised to make this show of haughtiness toward a Prince of so high an house, and above all towards a Cardinal; for there is never one of this exalted rank in the Church, but doth liken himself with the greatest Princes of Christendom. The Cardinal too was in the wrong to take so harsh reprisals; but 'tis ever very irksome to a noble and generous spirit, of whatever estate and calling, to put up with an affront.

Another of the same rank, the Cardinal de Granvelle, did likewise well know how to make the Comte d'Egmont feel his displeasure on the same account, and others too whose names be at the tip of my pen, but whom I will pass over for fear of confusing my subject overmuch, though I may return again to them later. I do now confine myself to our late King Henri le Grand, which monarch was exceeding respectful to the ladies, whom he was used to treat with all reverence, and did alway hate gainsayers of their honour. And when so great King doth so serve fair ladies, a monarch of such puissance and repute, very loath for sure be all men of his Court to open mouth for



to speak ill of the same. Beside, the Queen mother did exert a strong hand to guard her ladies and damsels, and make calumniators and satirists feel the weight of her resentment, when once they were found out, seeing how she had been as little spared by such as any of her ladies. Yet 'twas never herself she did take heed for so much as others, seeing, she was used to declare, how she did know her soul and conscience pure and void of offence, and could afford to laugh at these foul-mouthed writers and scandal-mongers. "Why! let them say their worst," she would say, "and have their trouble for nothing"; yet whenever she did catch them at it, she knew how to make them smart soundly.

It befell the elder Mlle. de Limeuil, at her first coming to Court, to compose a satire or lampoon (for she had the gift of witty speech and writing) on the Court generally, not however so much scandalous in its matter as diverting in form. Be assured the King's mother did make her pay for this well and feel the whip smartly, as well as two of her comrades which were in the secret to her majesty, through the house of Turenne, which is allied to that of Boulogne, she would have been chastised with every ignominy, and this by express order of the King, who had the most particular and curious dislike of such writings.

I do remember me of an incident connected with the Sieur de Matha, a brave and gallant gentleman much loved of the King, and a kinsman of Madame de Valentinois, which did ever have some diverting quarrel and complaint against the damsels and dames of the Court, of so merry a complexion was he. One day having attacked one of the Queen's maids of honour, another,

known by the name of "big Méray," was for taking up the cudgels for her companion. The only reply Matha did vouchsafe her was this: "Go to! I'm not attacking you, Méray; you're a great war-horse, and should be barded!"<sup>2</sup> For insooth she was the very biggest woman, maid or wife, I have ever seen. She did make complaint of the speech to the Queen, saying the other had called her a mare and a great war-horse to be barded. The Queen was so sore angered that Matha had to quit the Court for some days, spite of all the favour he had with his kinswoman Madame de Valentinois; and for a month after his return durst not set foot in the apartment of the Queen and her maids of honour.

The Sieur de Gersay did a much worse thing toward one of the Queen's maids of honour, to whom he was ill-disposed, for to avenge him upon her, albeit he was never at a loss for ready words; for indeed he was as good as most at saying a witty thing or telling a good story, and above all when spreading a scandal, of which art and mystery he was a past master; only scandal-mongering was at that time strongly forbidden. One day when he was present at the after dinner assembly of the Queen along with the other ladies and gentlemen of her Court, the custom then being that the company should not sit except on the floor when the Queen was present, de Gersay having taken from the pages and lackeys a ram's pizzle they were playing with in the Office Court of the Palace, sitting down beside her he did slip the same into the girl's frock, and this so softly as that she did never notice it,—that is not until the Queen did proceed to rise from her chair to retire to her private apartment. The girl, whose name I had better not give, did straight spring up, and as

she rose to her feet, right in front of the Queen, doth give so lusty a push to the strange plaything she had about her, as that it did make six or seven good bounces along the floor, for all the world as though it were fain of its own accord to give the company a free exhibition and some gratuitous sport. Who more astonished than the poor girl,—and the Queen to boot, for 'twas well in front of her with naught to prevent her view? “Mother of God!” cried the Queen, “and what is that, my child; what would you be at with that thing?” The unhappy maid of honour, blushing and half fainting with confusion, began to cry out she knew not what it was, that some one who did wish her ill had played this horrid trick on her, and how she thought 'twas none other but de Gersay which had done it. The latter waiting only to see the beginning of the sport and the first few bounces, was through the door by now. They sent to call him back, but he would never come, perceiving the Queen to be so very wroth, yet stoutly denying the whole thing all the while. So he was constrained for some days to fly her resentment, and the King's too; and indeed had he not been, along with Fontaine-Guérin, one of the Dauphin's prime favourites, he would assuredly have been in sore straits, albeit naught could ever be proven against him except by guess-work, and notwithstanding the fact that the King and his courtiers and not a few ladies could not refrain them from laughing at the incident, though they durst not show their amusement in view of the Queen's displeasure. For was never a lady in all the world knew better than she how to startle folk with a sudden and sore rebuke.

A certain honourable gentleman of the Court and a

maid of honour did one time, from the good affection they erst had with one another, fall into hate and sore quarrel; this went so far that one day the young lady said loud out to him in the Queen's apartment, the twain being in talk as to their difference: "Leave me alone, Sir, else I will tell what you told me." The gentleman, who had informed her in strict confidence of something about a very great lady, and fearing ill would befall him from it, and at the least he would be banished the Court, without more ado did answer back,—for he was ready enough of speech: "If you do tell what I have told you, I will tell what I have done to you." Who more astonished than the lady at this? yet did she contrive to reply: "Why! what have you done to me?" The other did reply: "Why! what have I told you?" Thereupon doth the lady make answer: "Oh! I know very well what you told me." To which the other: "Oh! and I know very well what I did to you." The lady doth retort, "But I'll prove quite clearly what you told me;" and the other: "And I'll prove clearer still what I did to you." At long last, after sticking a long while at this counterchange of reply and retort in identical form and almost the same words, they were parted by the gentlemen and ladies there present, albeit these got much diversion from the dispute.

This disputation having come to the Queen's ears, the latter was in great wrath thereanent, and was fain at once to know the words of the one and the deeds of the other, and did send to summon them. But the pair of them, seeing 'twas to be made a serious matter, did consult and straight agree together to say, whenas they did appear before the Queen, how that 'twas merely a game their so disputing with each other, and that neither had



she been told aught by the gentleman, nor yet had he done aught to her. So did they balk the Queen, which did none the less chide and sore blame the courtier, on the ground that his words were over free and like to make scandal. The man sware to me twenty times over that, and if they had not so made it up and agreed in a tale, and the lady had actually revealed the secret he had told her, which might well have turned to his great injury, he would have resolutely maintained he had done his will on her, challenging them to examine her, and if she should not be found virgin, that 'twas himself had deflowered her. "Well and good!" I answered, "but an if they had examined her and found her a maid, for she was quite young and unmarried, you would have been undone, and 'twould have gone hard but you had lost your life.—" "Body of me!" he did return, "that's just what I should have liked the best, that they should have examined the jade. I was well assured of my tale, for I knew quite well who had deflowered her, and that another man had been there right enough, though not I,—to my much regret. So being found already touched and soiled, she had been undone, and I avenged, and her good name ruined to boot. I should have got off with marrying her, and afterward ridding me of her, as I could." And these be the risks poor maids and wives have to run, whether they be in the right o't or the wrong!

## 3.



DID one time know a lady of very high rank which did actually find herself pregnant by the act of a very brave and gallant Prince;<sup>1</sup> 'twas said however the thing was done under promise of marriage, though later the contrary was ascertained to be the case. King Henri was the first to learn the facts, and was sore vexed thereat, for she was remotely connected with his Majesty. Any way, without making any further noise or scandal about the matter, he did the same evening at the Royal ball, chose her as his partner and lead her out to dance the torch-dance<sup>2</sup> with him; and afterward did make her dance with another the *galliard* and the rest of the "brawls," wherein she did display her readiness and dexterity better than ever, while her figure had all its old grace and was so well arranged for the occasion as that she gave no sign of her bigness. The end was that the King, who had kept his eyes fixed on her very strictly all the time, did perceive naught, no more than if she had not been with child at all, and did presently observe to a great nobleman, one of his chief familiars: "The folk were most ill-advised and spiteful to have gone about to invent the tale that yonder poor girl was big with child; never have I seen her in better grace. The spiteful authors of the calumny have told a most wicked falsehood." Thus this good King did shield the noble lady and poor girl, and did repeat the same thing to his Queen whenas he was to bed with her that night. But the latter, mistrusting the thing, did have her examined the next morning, herself being present, and she was found to be six months gone in preg-

nancy; after she did confess and avow the whole truth to the Queen, saying 'twas done under pretence of marriage to follow. Natheless the King, who was all good nature, had the secret kept as close as ever possible, so as not to bring shame and scandal on the damsel, though the Queen for her part was very wrathful. Any way, they did send her off very quietly to the home of her nearest kinsfolk, where she was presently brought to bed of a fine boy. Yet was the lad so unfortunate that he could never get him recognized by his putative father; the trial of the case did drag out to great length, but the mother could never get aught decided in her favour.

Now good King Henri did love merry tales as well as any of his predecessors, but he would never have scandal brought on ladies therein nor their secrets divulged. In fact, the King himself, who was of amorous complexion enough, when he was away to visit the ladies, would ever go thither stealthily and under cover all ever he could, to the end they might be free of suspicion and ill-repute. But an if there was any that was discovered, 'twas never by his fault or with his consent, but rather by the fair dame's doing. So have I heard of one lady of the sort, of a good house, named Madame Flamin, a Scotswoman, which being gotten with child by the King, did make no sort of secret of it, but would say it out boldly in her French Scotch thus: "I hae dune what I could, sae that the noo, God be thankit, I am wi' bairn by the King, whilk doth mak me an honoured and unco happy woman. And I maun say the blude Royal hath in it something of a more douce and tasty humour than the ordinar, I do find myself in sic gude case,—no to speak of the fine bits o' presents forthcoming."

Her son, that she had presently, was the late Grand Prior of France, who was killed lately at Marseilles,—a sore pity, for he was a very honourable, brave and gallant nobleman, and did show the same clearly at his death. Moreover he was a man of property and sense, and the least tyrannical Governor of a District of his own day or since. Provence could tell us that, and beside that he was a right magnificent Seigneur and of a generous expenditure. He was indeed a man of means, good sense and wise moderation.

The said lady, with others I have heard of, held the opinion that to lie with one's Sovereign was no disgrace; those be harlots indeed which do abandon their bodies to petty folk, but not where great Kings and gallant gentlemen be in question. Like that Queen of the Amazons I have named above, which came a journey of three hundred leagues for to be gotten with child by Alexander the Great, to have good issue therefrom. Yet there be those who say one man is as good as another for this!

After King Henri came Francis II., whose reign however was so short as that spiteful folks had no time even to begin speaking ill of ladies. Not that we are to believe, if he had enjoyed a long reign, that he would have suffered aught of the kind at his Court; for he was a monarch naturally good-natured, frank, and not one to take pleasure in scandal, as well as being most respectful toward ladies and very ready to pay them all honour. Beside he had the Queen his wife and the Queen his mother, and his good uncles to boot, all of which were much for checking these chatterers and loose-tongued gentry. I remember me how once, the King being at Saint-Germain en Laye, about the month of August or September, the



fancy took him one evening to go see the stags in their rut in that noble forest of Saint-Germain, and he did take with him certain princes, his chief familiars, and some great ladies, both wives and maids, whose names I could very well give, an if I chose. Nor was there lacking one fain to make a talk of it, and say this did not smack of his womankind being exactly virtuous or chaste, to be going to see these lovemakings and wanton ruttings of beasts, seeing how the appetite of Venus must heat them more and more at sight of such doings. In fact, so sore will they be longing to taste, that sure the water or saliva will be coming to their mouth, in such wise that no other remedy will there be thereafter for to get rid of the same except only by some other discharge of saliva, or something else. The King heard of this speech, and the noblemen and ladies which had accompanied him thither. Be well assured, an if the gentleman had not straightway decamped, he had fared very ill; nor did he ever again appear at Court till after that King's death and the end of his reign. Many scandalous pamphlets there were put forth against them which were then in direction of the Government of the Kingdom; but there was never an one that did so hurt and offend as a satire entitled *The Tiger*<sup>s</sup>—modelled on the first invective of Cicero against Catiline,—especially as it spake freely of the amours of a very great and fair lady, and a great nobleman, her kinsman. An if the gallant author had been caught, though he had had an hundred thousand lives, he had surely lost them every one; for the two great folks, lady and gentleman, were so exceeding vexed and angered as that they did all but die of despair.

This King Francis II. was not subject to love like his

predecessors; and truly he would have been greatly to blame, seeing he had to wife the fairest woman in all the world and the most amiable. And when a man hath such a wife, he doth not go seeking fortune elsewhere as others use, else is he a wretch indeed. And not so going, little reckes he to speak ill of ladies, or indeed to speak well either, or to speak at all about them, except always of his own good lady at home. 'Tis a doctrine I have heard a very honourable personage maintain: natheless have I known it prove false more than once.

King Charles came next to the throne, which by reason of the tenderness of his years, did pay no heed at the beginning of his reign to the ladies, but did rather give his thoughts to spending his time in youthful sports and exercises. Yet did the late deceased M. de Sipierre his Governour and Tutor, a man who was in my opinion and in that of every one else, the most honourable and most courteous gentleman of his time, and the most gentle and respectful toward women, did so well teach the same lesson to the King his master and pupil, as that he was as ready to honour ladies as any of the kings his predecessors. For never, whether as boy or man, did he see a woman, no matter how busied he was in other matters, whether he was hurrying on or standing still, on foot or on horse-back, but he would straight salute the same and most respectfully doff his cap. Whenas he came to an age for love, he did serve several very honourable dames and damsels I have known of, but all this with so great honour and respect as that he might have been the humblest gentleman of the Court.

In his reign the great lampoonists did first begin their vogue, and amongst them even some very gallant gentle-

men of the Court, whose names I will not give, did strangely abuse the ladies, both in general and in particular, and even some of the greatest in the land. For this some of them have found themselves entangled in downright fierce quarrels, and have come off second best,—not indeed that they did avow the truth, for they did rather always deny they had aught to do with it. If they had confessed, they had had heavy payment to make, and the King would certainly have let them feel the weight of his displeasure, inasmuch as they did attack ladies of over high a rank. Others did show the best face they could, and did suffer the lie to be cast in their teeth a thousand times over, conditionally as we may say and vaguely, and had to swallow a thousand affronts, drinking the same in as sweetly as though they had been milk, without daring to retort one word, else had their lives been at risk. 'Tis a thing which hath oft given me great surprise that such-like folks should set them to speak ill of their neighbours, yet suffer others to speak ill of themselves so sorely and to their very face. Yet had these men the repute of being gallant swordsmen; but in this matter they would aye endure all but the extremest insult bravely and without one word of protest.

I do remember me of a lampoon which was made against a very great lady, a widow, fair and of most honourable birth, which did desire to marry again with a very great Prince, a young and handsome man.<sup>4</sup> There were certain persons, (and I have accurate knowledge of the same), who disliking this marriage, and to dissuade the Prince therefrom, did concoct a lampoon on her, the most scandalous I have ever seen, in the which they did compare her to five or six of the chiefest harlots of Antiquity, and

the most notorious and wanton, declaring how that she did overtop them each and all. The actual authors of the said satire did present it to the Prince, professing however that it did emanate from others, and that themselves had merely been given it. The Prince, having looked at it, gave the lie to its statements and hurled a thousand vague and general insults at them which had writ it; yet did they pass all over in silence, brave and valiant men though they were. The incident however did give the Prince pause a while, seeing the lampoon did contain several definite revelations and point direct at some unpleasant facts; nathless after the lapse of two years more was the marriage accomplished.

The King was so great-hearted and kindly that he was never inclined to favour folks of this kidney. To pass a spicy word or two with them aside, this he did like well enough; but he was always most unwilling the common herd should be fed on such diet, declaring that his Court, which was the best ennobled and most illustrious by reason of great and noble ladies of any in all the world, should never, such being its high repute, be cheapened and foully aspersed by the mouth of suchlike reckless and insolent babblers. 'Twas well enough to speak so of the courtesans of Rome, or Venice, or other the like places, but not of the Court of France; it might be permitted to do the thing, it was not permitted to speak thereof.

Thus do we see how this Sovereign was ever respectful toward ladies, nay! so much so that in his later days when some I know of were fain to give him an evil impression of certain very great, as well as most fair and honourable dames, for that these had intermeddled in some highly important matters of his concern, yet would he never



credit aught against them; but did accord them as good favour as ever, dying at the last in their very good graces and with many a tear of their shedding to wet his corpse. And they did find good cause to say so too, so soon as ever King Henri III. came to succeed him, who by reason of sundry ill reports he had been told of these ladies when in Poland, did not make near so much of them as he had done aforetime. Both over these and over some others that I know of, he did exercise a very strict censorship, and one we may be sure that made him not more liked; and indeed I do believe they did him no little hurt, and contributed in part to his evil fortune and final ruin. I could allege sundry special facts in proof hereof, but I had rather pass them over,—saying only this much, that women generally are keen set on taking vengeance. It may be long in coming, but they do execute it at the last. On the contrary many men's revenge is just the opposite in its nature, for ardent and hot enough at its first beginning to deceive all, yet by dint of temporising and putting off and long delays it doth grow cool and come to naught. And this is why 'tis meet to guard against the first attempt, and take time by the forelock in parrying the blows; but with women the first fury and attempt, and the temporising and delay, do both last out to the end,—that is in some women, though hardly many.

Some have been for excusing the King for the war he made on women in the way of crying them down, by saying 'twas in order to curb and correct vice,—as if the curb were of any of the slightest use in these cases, seeing woman is so conditioned of nature as that the more this thing is forbid her, the more ardent is she after the same, and to set a watch on her is just labour lost. So in actual

fact myself have seen how, for all he could do, they were never turned out of their natural road.

Several ladies that I wot well enough, did he love and serve with all due respect and very high honour,—and even a certain very great and fair Princess,<sup>5</sup> of whom he had fallen so deep in love before his going into Poland, that after he became King, he did resolve to wed the same, although she was already married to a great and gallant Prince, but one that was in rebellion against him and had fled to a foreign land to gather an army and make war upon him. But at the moment of his return to France, the lady died in child-birth. Her death alone did hinder the marriage, for he was firm set thereon. He would certainly have married her by favour and dispensation of the Pope, who would not have refused him his consent, being so great a Monarch as he was, and for sundry other reasons that may be readily imagined.

Others again he did make love to only for to bring the same into disparagement. Of such I wot of one, a great lady, in whose case, for the displeasures her husband had wrought him, and not able otherwise to get at him, the King did take his revenge on his wife, whom he did after publish abroad for what she was in the presence of a number of folk. Yet was this vengeance mild and merciful after all, for in lieu of death he did give her life.

Another I wot of, which for overmuch playing the wanton, as also for a displeasure she did the King, the latter did of set purpose pay court to. Anon without any vast deal of persuasion, she did grant him an assignation in a garden, the which he failed not to keep. But he would have naught else to do with her (so some folk say, but be sure he did find something to do with her right enough)

but only to have her so seen offering herself in open market, and then to banish her from the Court with ignominy.

He was anxious and exceeding inquisitive to know the life of all and every fair lady of his Court, and to penetrate their secret wishes. 'Tis said he did sometimes reveal one or other of his successes with women to sundry of his most privy intimates. Happy they! for sure the leavings of suchlike great monarchs must needs be very tasty morsels.

The ladies did fear him greatly, as I have myself seen. He would either reprimand them personally, when needful, or else beg the Queen his mother so to do, who on her part was ready enough at the work. 'Twas not however that she did favour scandal-mongers, as I have shown above in the little examples I have there given. And paying such heed as she did to these and showing so great displeasure against them, what was she not bound to do others which did actually compromise the good name and honour of her ladies?

This monarch again was so well accustomed from his earliest years, as myself have seen, to hear tales of ladies and their gallantries (and truly myself have told him one or two such), and to repeat them too,—yet alway in secret, for fear the Queen his mother should learn thereof, for she would never have him tell such stories to any others than herself, that she might check the same,—so well accustomed was he to all this, that coming to riper years and full liberty, he did never lose the habit. And in this wise he did know how they did all live at his Court and in his Kingdom,—or at the least many of them, and especially the great ladies of rank, as well as if he had frequented them every one. And if any there were which

were new come to Court, accosting these most courteously and respectfully, yet would he tell them over such tales as that they would be utterly amazed at heart to know where he had gotten all his information, though all the while denying and protesting against the whole budget to his face. And if he did divert himself after this fashion, yet did he not fail, in other and more weighty matters, to apply his visit to such high purpose as that folk have counted him the greatest King which for an hundred years hath been in France, as I have writ elsewhere in a chapter composed expressly upon this Sovereign.<sup>6</sup>

Accordingly I do now say no more about him, albeit it may be objected to me that I have been but chary of examples of his character on this point, and that I should say more, an if I be so well informed. Yea! truly, I do know tales enough, and some of them high-spiced; but I wish not to be a mere chronicler of news whether of the Court or of the world at large. Beside, I could never cloak and cover up these my tales so featly but that folk would see through them, and scandal come therefrom.

Now these traducers of fair ladies be of divers sorts. Some do speak ill of women for some displeasure these have done them, though all the while they be as chaste as any in all the world, and instead of the pure and beautiful angel they really resemble do make out a picture of a devil all foul and ugly with wickedness. Thus an honourable gentleman I have both seen and known, did most abominably defame a very honourable and virtuous lady for a slight affront she had put upon him, and did sorely wreak his displeasure on her. He would say thus: "I know quite well I am in the wrong, and do not deny the lady to be really most chaste and virtuous. But be



it who it may, the woman which shall have affronted me in the smallest degree, though she were as chaste and pure as the Blessed Virgin herself, seeing I can in no other way bring her to book, as I would with a man, I will say every evil gallows thing I can think of concerning her." Yet surely God will be angered at such a wretch.

Other traducers there be, which loving ladies and failing to overcome their virtue and get aught out of them, do of sheer despite proclaim them public wantons. Nay! they will do yet worse, saying openly they have had their will of them, but having known them and found them too exceeding lustful, have for this cause left them. Myself have known many gentlemen of this complexion at our French Kings' Courts. Then again there is the case of women quitting right out their pretty lovers and bed favourites, but who presently, following the dictates of their fickleness and inconstancy, grow sick again and enamoured of others in their stead; whereupon these same lovers, in despite and despair, do malign and traduce these poor women, there is no saying how bitterly, going so far even as to relate detail by detail their naughtinesses and wanton tricks which they have practised together, and to make known their blemishes which they have on their naked bodies, to win the better credence to their tale.

Other men there be which, in despite because ladies do give to others what they refuse to them, do malign them with might and main, and have them watched and spied upon and observed, to the end they may afford the world the greater signs and proofs of their true speaking.

Others again there be, which, fairly stung with jealousy, without other cause than this, do speak ill of those men whom women love the most, and of the very women

whom they themselves love fondly until they see their faults fully revealed. And this is one of the chiefest effects of jealousy. Yet are such traducers not so sore to blame as one would at first say they were; for this their fault must be set down to love and jealousy; twin brother and sister of one and the same birth.

Other traducers there be which are so born and bred to backbiting, as that rather than not backbite some one or other, they will speak ill of their own selves. Now, think you 'tis likely ladies' honour will be spared in the mouth of folks of this kidney? Many suchlike have I seen at the Courts of our Kings, which being afeared to speak of men by reason of their sword play, would raise up scandal around the petticoats of poor weak women, which have no other means of reprisal but tears, regrets and empty words. Yet have I known not a few which have come off very ill at this game; for there have been kinsmen, brothers, friends, lovers of theirs, even husbands, which have made many repent of their spite, and eat and swallow down their foul words.

Finally, did I but tell of all the diverse sorts of detractors of ladies, I should never have done.

An opinion I have heard many maintain as to love is this: that a love kept secret is good for naught, an if it be not in some degrees manifest,—if not to all, at the least to a man's most privy friends. But an if it cannot be told to all, yet at the least must some show be made thereof, whether by display of favours, wearing of fair ladies' liveries and colours, or acts of knightly prowess, as tiltings at the ring, tourneys, mascarades, fights in the lists, even to fights in good earnest when at the wars.

Verily the content of a man is great at these satisfactions.

For to tell truth, what would it advantage a great Captain to have done a fine and signal exploit of war, if not a word were said and naught known thereof? I ween 'twould be a mortal vexation to him. The like would rightly seem to be the case with lovers which do love nobly,—as some at any rate maintain. And of this opinion was that prince of lovers, M. de Nemours, the paragon of all knighthood; for truly if ever Prince, great Lord or simple gentleman, hath been fortunate in love, 'twas he. He found no pleasure in hiding his successes from his most privy friends, albeit from the general he did keep the same so secret, as that only with much difficulty could folk form a judgment thereanent.

In good sooth, for married ladies is the revealing of such matters highly dangerous. On the other hand for maids and widows, which are to marry, 'tis of no account; for that the cloak and pretext of a future marriage doth cover up all sins.

I once knew a very honourable gentleman at Court, which being lover of a very great lady, and finding himself one day in company of a number of his comrades in discourse as to their mistresses, and agreeing together to reveal the favours received of them to each other, the said gentleman did all through refuse to declare his mistress, and did even feign quite another lady to be his dear, and so threw dust in their eyes,—and this although there was present in the group a great Prince, which did conjure him to tell the truth, having yet some suspicion of the secret intrigue he was engaged in. But neither he nor his companions could draw anything more out of him, al-

though in his inmost heart he did curse his fate an hundred times over, which had so constrained him not to reveal, like the rest of them, his success and triumph, ever more sweet to tell of than defeat.

Another I once knew, and a right gallant gentleman, by reason of his presumption and overmuch freedom of speech in proclaiming of his mistress' name, the which he should have held sacred, as much by signs and tokens as by actual words, did come parlous near his death in a murderous attack he but barely escaped from. Yet afterward on another count he did not so escape the assassins' swords, but did presently die of the hurt they gave him.

Myself was at Court in the time of King Francis II. when the Comte de Saint-Aignan did wed at Fontainebleau with young Madame la Bourdaisière.<sup>7</sup> Next day, the bridegroom having come into the King's apartment, each and all of the courtiers present did begin to vent their japes on him. Amongst others a certain great Lord and very gallant soldier did ask him how may stages he had made. The husband replied five. As it fell out, there was also there present an honourable gentleman, a Secretary, which was then in the very highest favour with a very great Princess, whose name I will not give, who hereupon declared,—'twas nothing much, considering the fair road he had travelled and the fine weather he had, for it was summer-time. The great Lord then said to him, "Ho! my fine fellow, you 'ld be for having birds enough to your bag, it seems!"—"And prithee, why not?" retorted the Secretary. "By God! why! I have taken a round dozen in four and twenty hours on the most fairest meadow is in all this neighbourhood, or can be anywhere in all France." Who more astounded than the said Lord,



who did learn by these words a thing he had longwhile suspected? And seeing that himself was deep in love with this same Princess, he was exceeding mortified to think how he had so long hunted in this quarter without ever getting aught, whereas the other had been so lucky in his sport. This the Lord did dissimulate for the moment; but later, after long brooding over his resentment, he had paid him back hot and strong in his own coin but for a certain consideration that I prefer not to mention. Yet did he ever after bear him a secret grudge. Indeed, an if the Secretary had been really well advised, he would never have so boasted of his bag, but would rather have kept the thing very secret, especially in so high and brilliant an adventure, whereof trouble and scandal were exceeding like to arise.

What should we say of a certain gentleman of the great world, which for some displeasure his mistress had done him, was so insolent as that he went and showed her husband the lady's portrait, which she had given him, and which he carried hung at his neck. The husband did exhibit no small astonishment, and thereafter showed him less loving toward his wife, who yet did contrive to gloze over the matter as well as she could.

Still more to blame was a great Lord I wot of, who disgusted at some trick his mistress had played on him, did stake her portrait at dice and lose it to one of his soldiers, for he was in command of a large company of infantry. Hearing thereof, the lady came nigh bursting with vexation, and was exceeding angered. The Queen Mother did presently hear of it, and did reprimand him for what he had done, on the ground that the scorn put on her was far too extreme, so to go and abandon to the chance of

the dice the portrait of a fair and honourable lady. But the Lord did soon set the matter in a better light, declaring how that in his hazard, he had kept back the parchment inside, and had staked only the box encasing the same, which was of gold and enriched with precious stones. Myself have many a time heard the tale discussed between the lady and the said Lord in right merry wise, and have whiles laughed my fill thereat.

Hereanent will I say one thing: to wit, that there be ladies,—and myself have known sundry such,—which in their loves do prefer to be defied, threatened, and eke bullied; and a man will in this fashion have his way with them better far than by gentle dealings and complacencies. Just as with fortresses, some be taken by sheer force of arms, others by gentler means. Yet will no women endure to be reviled and cried out upon as whores; for such words be more offensive to them than the things they do represent.

Sulla would never forgive the city of Athens, nor refrain from the utter overthrow of the same root and branch, not by reason of the obstinacy of its defence against him, but solely because from the top of the walls thereof the citizens had foully abused his wife Metella and touched her honour to the quick.

In certain quarters, the which I will not name, the soldiery in skirmishes and sieges of fortified places were used, the one side against the other, to cast reproach upon the virtue of two of their sovereign Princesses, going so far as to cry forth one to the other: “Your Princess doth play ninepins fine and well!”—“And yours is downright good at a main too!” By dint of these aspersions and bywords were the said Princesses cause of rousing

them to do havoc and commit cruelties more than any other reason whatever, as I have myself seen.

I have heard it related how that the chiefest motive which did most animate the Queen of Hungary to light up those her fierce fires of rage about Picardy and other regions of France was to revenge sundry insolent and foul-mouthed gossips, which were forever telling of her amours, and singing aloud through all the countryside the refrain:

Au, au Barbanson,  
Et la reine d'Ongrie,

—a coarse song at best, and in its loud-voiced ribaldry smacking strong of vagabond and rustic wit.

4.



CATO could never stomach Cæsar from that day when in the Senate, which was deliberating as to measures against Catiline and his conspiracy, Cæsar being much suspected of being privy to the plot, there was brought in to the latter under the rose a little packet, or more properly speaking a *billet doux*, the which Servilia, Cato's sister, did send for to fix an assignation and meeting place. Cato now no more doubting of the complicity of Cæsar with Catiline, did cry out loud that the Senate should order him to show the communication in question. Thus constrained, Cæsar made the said letter public, wherein the honour of the other's sister was brought into sore scandal and open disrepute. I leave you then to imagine if Cato, for all the fine airs he did affect of hating Cæsar

for the Republic's sake, could ever come to like him, in view of this most compromising incident. Yet was it no fault of Cæsar's, for he was bound to show the letter, and that on risk of his life. And I ween Servilia bare him no special ill-will for this; for in fact and deed they ceased not to carry on still their loving intercourse, whereof sprang Brutus, whose father Cæsar was commonly reputed to have been. If so, he did but ill requite his parent for having given him being.

True it is, ladies in giving of themselves to great men, do run many risks; and if they do win of the same favours, and high privileges and much wealth, yet do they buy all these at a great price.

I have heard tell of a very fair lady, honourable and of a good house, though not of so great an one as a certain great Lord, who was deep in love with her. One day having found the lady in her chamber alone with her women, and seated on her bed, after some converse betwixt them and sundry conceits concerning love, the Lord did proceed to kiss the lady and did by gentle constraint lay her down upon the bed. Anon coming to the main issue, and she enduring that same with quiet, civil firmness, she did say thus to him: "'Tis a strange thing how you great Lords cannot refrain you from using your authority and privileges upon us your inferiors. At the least, if only silence were as common with you as is freedom of speech, you would be but too desirable and excusable. I do beg you therefore, Sir! to hold secret what you do, and keep mine honour safe."

Such be the words customarily employed by ladies of inferior station to their superiors. "Oh! my Lord," they cry, "think at any rate of mine honour." Others say,



"Ah! my dear Lord, an if you speak of this, I am undone; in Heaven's name safeguard mine honour." Others again, "Why! my good Lord! if only you do say never a word and mine honour be safe, I see no great objection," as if wishing to imply thereby a man may do what he please, an if it be in secret. So other folk know naught about it, they deem themselves in no wise dishonoured.

Ladies of higher rank and more proud station do say to their gallants, if inferior to themselves: "Be you exceeding careful not to breathe one word of the thing, no matter how small. Else it is a question of your life; I will have you thrown in a sack into the water, or assassinated, or hamstrung;" such and suchlike language do they hold. In fact there is never a lady, of what rank soever she be, that will endure to be evil spoke of or her good name discussed however slightly in the Palace or in men's mouths. Yet are there some others which be so ill-advised, or desperate, or entirely carried away of love, as that without men bringing any charge against them, they do traduce their own selves. Of such sort was, no long while ago, a very fair and honourable lady, of a good house, with the which a great Lord did fall deep in love, and presently enjoying her favours, did give her a very handsome and precious bracelet. This she was so ill-advised as to wear commonly on her naked arm above the elbow. But one day her husband, being to bed with her, did chance to discover the same; and examining it, found matter enough therein to cause him to rid him of her by a violent death. A very foolish and ill-advised woman truly!

I knew at another time a very great and sovereign Prince who after keeping true to a mistress, one of the

fairest ladies of the Court, by the space of three years, at the end of that time was obliged to go forth on an expedition for to carry out some conquest. Before starting, he did of a sudden fall deep in love with a very fair and honourable Princess, if ever there was one. Then for to show her he had altogether quitted his former mistress for her sake, and wishing to honour and serve her in every way, without giving a second thought to the memory of his old love, he did give her before leaving all the favours, jewels, rings, portraits, bracelets and other such pretty things which his former mistress had given him. Some of these being seen and noted of her, she came nigh dying of vexation and despite; yet did she not refrain from divulging the matter; for if only she could bring ill repute on her rival, she was ready to suffer the same scandal herself. I do believe, had not the said Princess died some while after, that the Prince, on his coming back from abroad, would surely have married her.

I knew yet another Prince,<sup>1</sup> though not so great an one, which during his first wife's lifetime and during his widowhood, did come to love a very fair and honourable damsel of the great world, to whom he did make, in their courting and love time, most beautiful presents, neck-chains, rings, jewels and many other fine ornaments, and amongst others a very fine and richly framed mirror wherein was set his own portrait. Well! presently this same Prince came to wed a very fair and honourable Princess of the great world, who did make him lose all taste for his first mistress, albeit neither fell aught below the other for beauty. The Princess did then so work upon and strongly urge the Prince her husband, as that he did anon send to

demand back of his former mistress all he had ever given her of fairest and most rich and rare.

This was a very sore chagrin to the lady; yet was she of so great and high an heart, albeit she was no Princess, though of one of the best houses in France, as that she did send him back all that was most fair and exquisite, wherein was a beautiful mirror with the picture of the said Prince. But first, for to decorate the same still better, she did take a pen and ink, and did scrawl inside a great pair of horns for him right in the mid of the forehead. Then handing the whole to the gentleman, the Prince's messenger, she spake thuswise to him: "Here, my friend, take this to your master, and tell him I do hereby send him back all he ever gave me, and that I have taken away nor added naught, unless it be something he hath himself added thereto since. And tell yonder fair Princess, his wife, which hath worked on him so strongly to demand back all his presents of me, that if a certain great Lord (naming him by name, and myself do know who it was) had done the like by her mother, and had asked back and taken from her what he had many a time and oft given her for sleeping with him, by way of love gifts and amorous presents, she would be as poor in gewgaws and jewels as ever a young maid at Court. Tell her, that for her own head, the which is now so loaded at the expense of this same Lord and her mother's belly, she would then have to go scour the gardens every morning for to pluck flowers to deck it withal, instead of jewelry. Well! let her e'en make what show and use she will of them; I do freely give them up to her." Any which hath known this fair lady will readily understand she was such an one as to have said as much; and herself did tell me

she did, and very free of speech she aye was. Yet could she not fail but feel it sore, whether from husband or wife, to be so ill treated and deceived. And the Princess was blamed of many folk, which said 'twas her own fault, to have so despitefully used and driven her to desperation the poor lady, the which had well earned such presents by the sweat of her body.

This lady, for that she was one of the most beautiful and agreeable women of her time, failed not, notwithstanding she had so sacrificed her virtue to this Prince, to make a good marriage with a very rich man, though not her equal in family. So one day, the twain being come to mutual reproaches as to the honour they had done each the other in marrying, and she making a point of the high estate she was of and yet had married him, he did retort, "Nay! but I have done more for you than you have done for me; for I have dishonoured myself for to recover your honour for you;" meaning to infer by this that, whereas she had lost hers when a girl, he had won it back for her, by taking her to wife.

I have heard tell, and I ween on good authority, how that, after King Francis I. had quitted Madame de Chasteaubriand, his most favourite mistress, to take Madame d'Etampes, Helly by her maiden name, whom the Queen Regent had chosen for one of her Maids of Honour and did bring to the King's notice on his return from Spain to Bordeaux,—and he did take her for his mistress, and left the aforesaid Madame de Chasteaubriand, as they say one nail doth drive out another,—his new mistress Madame d'Etampes, did beg the King to have back from the Chasteaubriand all the best jewels which he had given her. Now this was in no wise for the price or value of the



same, for in those days pearls and precious stones had not the vogue they have since gotten, but for liking of the graceful mottoes which had been set, imprinted and engraven thereon, the which the Queen of Navarre, his sister, had made and composed; for she was a past mistress of this art. So King Francis did grant her prayer, and promising he would do this, was as good as his word. To this end he did send one of his gentlemen to her for to demand their return, but she on the instant did feign herself sick and appointed the gentleman to come again in three days' time, when he should have what he craved. Meantime, in her despite, she did send for a goldsmith, and had him melt down all the jewels, without any regard or thought of the dainty devices which were engraven thereon. Then anon, when the messenger was returned, she did give him all the ornaments converted and changed into gold ingots. "Go, carry this," she said, "to the King, and tell him that, as it hath pleased his Majesty to ask back what he did erst so generously give me, I do now return and send back the same in gold ingots. As for the mottoes and devices, these I have so well conned over and imprinted on my mind, and do hold them so dear, as that I could in no wise suffer any other should use or enjoy the same and have delight therein but myself."

When the King had received the whole, ingots and message and all, he made no other remark but only this, "Nay! give her back the whole. What I was for doing, 'twas not for the worth of the gold (for I would have gladly given her twice as much), but for liking of the devices and mottoes; but seeing she hath so destroyed these, I care not for the gold, and do return it her again.

Herein hath she shown more greatness and boldness of heart than ever I had dreamed could come of a woman." A noble-spirited lady's heart, chagrined so and scorned, is capable of great things.

These Princes which do so recall their presents act much otherwise than did once Madame de Nevers, of the house of Bourbon, daughter of M. de Montpensier. This same was in her day a very prudent, virtuous and beautiful Princess, and held for such both in France and Spain, in which latter country she had been brought up along with Queen Elisabeth of France, being her cup-bearer and giving her to drink; for it must be known this Queen was aye served by her gentlewomen, dames and damsels, and each had her rank and office, the same as we Courtiers in attendance on our Kings. This Princess was married to the Comte d'Eu, eldest son of M. de Nevers, she worthy of him as he was right well worthy of her, being one of the handsomest and most pleasing Princes of his time. For which cause was he much loved and sought after of many fair and noble ladies of the Court, amongst others of one which was both this, and a very adroit and clever woman to boot. Now it befell one day that the Prince did take a ring from off his wife's finger, a very fine one, a diamond worth fifteen hundred or mayhap two thousand crowns, the which the Queen of Spain had given her on her quitting her Court. This ring the Prince, seeing how his mistress did admire it greatly and did show signs of coveting its possession, being very free-handed and generous, did frankly offer her, giving her to understand he had won the same at tennis. Nor did she refuse the gift, but taking it as a great mark of affection, did always wear it on her finger for love of him. And thus Madame de Nevers,

who did understand from her good husband that he had lost the ring at tennis, or at any rate that it was lying pawned, came presently to see the same on the hand of her rival, whom she was quite well aware was her husband's mistress. Yet was she so wise and prudent and had such command of herself, as that, merely changing colour somewhat and quietly dissembling her chagrin, without any more ado she did turn her head another way, and did breathe never a word of the matter either to her husband or his mistress. Herein was she much to be commended, for that she did show no cross-grained, vixenish temper, nor anger, nor yet expose the younger lady to public scorn, as not a few others I wot of would have done, thus delighting the company and giving them occasion for gossip and scandal-mongering.

Thus we see how necessary is moderation in such matters and how excellent a thing, as also that here no less than elsewhere doth luck and ill-luck prevail. For some ladies there be which cannot take one step aside or make the very smallest stumble in the path of virtue, or taste of love but with the tip of their finger, but lo! they be instantly traduced, exposed and satirized right and left.

Others again there be which do sail full before the wind over the sea and pleasant waters of Venus, and with naked body and wide spread limbs do swim with wide strokes therein, wantoning in its waves, voyaging toward Cyprus and the Temple of Venus there and her gardens, and taking their fill of delight in love; yet deuce a word doth any say about them, no more than if they had never been born. Thus doth fortune favour some and mislike others in matter of scandal-making; myself have seen not a few examples thereof in my day, and some be found still.

In the time of King Charles was writ a lampoon at Fontainbleau, most base and scurrilous, wherein the fellow did spare neither the Royal Princesses nor the very greatest ladies nor any others. And verily, an if the true author had been known, he would have found himself in very ill case.

At Blois moreover, whenas the marriage of the Queen of Navarre was arranged with the King, her husband, was made yet another, against a very great and noble lady, and a most scurrilous one, whereof the author was never discovered. But there were really some very brave and valiant gentlemen mixed up therein, which however did carry it off very boldly and made many loud general denials. So many others beside were writ, as that naught else was seen whether in this reign or in that of King Henri III.—and above all one most scurrilous one in the form of a song, and to the tune of a *coranto* which was then commonly danced at Court, and hence came to be sung among the pages and lackeys on every note, high and low.

## 5.



IN the days of our King Henri III. was a yet worse thing done. A certain gentleman, whom I have known both by name and person, did one day make a present to his mistress of a book of pictures, wherein were shown two and thirty ladies of high or middling rank about the Court, painted in true colours, a-bed and sporting with their lovers, who were likewise represented and that in the most natural way. Some had two or three lovers, some more, some less; and these thirty-two ladies did figure forth more than seven



and twenty of the figures or *postures* of Aretino, and all different. The actors were so well represented and so naturally, as that they did seem actually to be speaking and doing. While some were disrobed, other were shown clad in the very same clothes, and with the same head-dresses, ornaments and weeds as they were commonly to be seen wearing. In a word, so cunningly was the book wrought and painted that naught could be more curious; and it had cost eight or nine hundred crowns, and was illuminated throughout.

Now this lady did show it one day and lend it to another, her comrade and bosom friend, which latter was much a favourite and familiar of a great Lady that was in the book, and one of the most vividly and vigorously represented there; so seeing how much it concerned herself, she did give her best attention. Then being curious of all experience, she was fain to look it over with another, a great lady, her cousin and chiefest friend, who had begged her to afford her the enjoyment of the sight, and who was likewise in the pictures, like the rest.

So the book was examined very curiously and with the greatest care, leaf by leaf, without passing over a single one lightly, so that they did spend two good hours of the afternoon at the task. The fair ladies, far from being annoyed or angered thereat, did find good cause for mirth therein, seeing them to admire the pictures mightily, and gaze at them fixedly.

These two dames were bolder and more valiant and determined than one I have heard tell of, who one day looking at this same book with two others of her friends, so ravished with delight was she and did enter into such an ecstasy of love and so burning a desire to imitate these

same luscious pictures, as that she cannot see out of her eyes till the fourth page, and at the fifth did fall in a dead faint. A terrible swoon truly! very different to that of Octavia, sister of Cæsar Augustus, who one day hearing Virgil recite the three verses he had writ on her dead son Marcellus (for which she did give him three thousand crowns for the three alone) did incontinently swoon right away. That was love indeed, but of how different a sort!

I have heard tell, in the days when I was at Court, of a great Prince of the highest rank, old and well stricken in years, and who ever since the loss of his wife had borne him very continently in his widowhood, as indeed was but consistent with his high repute for sanctity of life. At last he was fain to marry again with a very fair, virtuous and young Princess. But seeing how for the ten years he had been a widower he had never so much as touched a woman, and fearing to have forgot the way of it (as though it were an art that a man may forget), and to get a rebuff the first night of his wedlock, and perform naught of his desire, was anxious to make a previous essay. So by dint of money he did win over a fair young maid, a virgin like the wife he was to marry; nay more, 'tis said he had her chosen to resemble somewhat in features his future wife. Fortune was so kind to him that he did prove he had by no means forgot as yet his old skill; and his essay was so successful that, bold and happy, he did advance to his wife's fortress, and won good victory and high repute.

This essay was more successful than that of another gentleman whose name I have heard, whom his father, although he was very young and much of a simpleton,

did desire should marry. Well! first of all he was for making an essay, to know if he would be a good mate with his wife; so for this end, some months aforehand, he did get him a pretty-faced harlot, whom he made to come every afternoon to his father's warren, for 'twas summer-time, where he did frisk and make sport with the damsel in the freshness of the green trees and a gushing fountain in such wise that he did perform wonders. Thus encouraged, he feared no man, but was ready enough to play the like bold part with his wife. But the worst of it was that when the marriage night was come, and it was time to go with his wife, lo! he cannot do a thing. Who so astonished as the poor youth, and who so ready to cry out upon his accursed recreant weapon, which had so missed fire in the new spot where he now was. Finally plucking up his courage, he said thus to his wife, "My pretty one, I cannot tell what this doth mean, for every day I have done wonders in the warren," and so recounted over his deeds of prowess to her. "Let us to sleep now, and my advice is, to-morrow after dinner I will take you thither, and you shall see very different sport." This he did, and his wife found him as good as his word. Hence the saying current at Court, "Ha, ha! an if I had you in my father's warren, you should see what I would do!" We can only suppose that the god of gardens, Dan Priapus, and the fauns and wanton satyrs which haunt the woods, do there aid good fellows and favour their deeds of prowess.

Yet are not all essays alike, nor do all end favorably. For in matter of love, I have both seen and heard tell of not a few good champions which have failed to remember their lessons and keep their engagements when they came to the chief task of all. For while some be either too

hot or too cold, in such wise that these humours, of ice or of fire, do take them of a sudden, others be lost in an ecstasy to find so sovran a treat within their arms; others again grow over fearful, others get instantly and totally flaccid and impotent, without the least knowing the reason why, and yet others find themselves actually paralysed. In a word there be so many unexpected accidents which may occur just at the wrong moment, that if I were to tell them all, I should not have done for ages. I can only refer me to many married folk and other amateurs of love, who can say an hundred times more of all this than I. Now such essays be good for the men, but not for the women. Thus I have heard tell of a mother, a lady of quality, who holding very dear an only daughter she had, and having promised the same in marriage to an honourable gentleman, avant que de l'y faire entrer et craignant qu'elle ne pût souffrir ce premier et dur effort, à quoi on disait le gentilhomme être très rude et fort proportionné, elle la fit essayer premièrement par un jeune page qu'elle avait, assez grandet, une douzaine de fois, disant qu'il n'y avait que la première ouverture fâcheuse à faire et que, se faisant un peu douce et petite au commencement, qu'elle endurerait la grande plus aisément; comme il advint, et qu'il y put avoir de l'apparence. Cet essai est encore bien plus honnête et moins scandaleux qu'un qui me fut dit une fois, en Italie, d'un père qui avait marié son fils, qui était encore un jeune sot, avec une fort belle fille à laquelle, tant fat qu'il était, il n'avait rien pu faire ni la première ni la seconde nuit de ses noces; et comme il eut demandé et au fils et à la nore comme ils se trouvaient en mariage et s'ils avaient triomphé, ils répondirent l'un et l'autre: "*Niente.*—A



quoi a-t-il tenu?" demanda à son fils. Il répondit tout follement qu'il ne savait comment il fallait faire. Sur quoi il prit son fils par une main et la nore par une autre et les mena tous deux en une chambre et leur dit: "Or je vous veux donc montrer comme il faut faire." Et fit coucher sa nore sur un bout de lit, et lui fait bien élargir les jambes, et puis dit à son fils: "Or vois comment je fais," et dit à sa nore: "Ne bougez, non importe, il n'y a point de mal." Et en mettant son membre bien arboré dedans, dit: "Avisé bien comme je fais et comme je dis, *Dentro fuero, dentro fuero,*" et répliqua souvent ces deux mots en s'avancant dedans et reculant, non pourtant tout dehors. Et ainsi, après ces fréquentes agitations et paroles, *dentro* et *fuero*, quand ce vint à la consommation, il se mit à dire brusquement et vite: *Dentro, dentro, dentro, dentro*, jusqu'à ce qu'il eût fait. Au diable le mot de *fuero*. Et par ainsi, pensant faire du magister, il fut tout à plat adultère de sa nore, laquelle, ou qu'elle fit de la niaise ou, pour mieux dire, de la fine, s'en trouva très bien pour ce coup, voire pour d'autres que lui donna le fils et le père et tout, possible pour lui mieux apprendre sa leçon, laquelle il ne lui voulut pas apprendre à demi ni à moitié, mais à perfection. Aussi toute leçon ne vaut rien autrement.

I have heard many enterprising and successful Lovelaces declare how that they have often seen ladies in these faints and swoonings, yet always readily coming to again afterward. Many women, they said, do cry out: "Alackaday! I am a-dying!"—but 'tis, I ween, a mighty agreeable sort of death. Others there be which do turn back their eyes in their head for excess of pleasure, as if about to expire outright, and let themselves

go absolutely motionless and insensible. Others I have been told do so stiffen and spasmodically contract their nerves, arteries and limbs, as that they do bring on cramp; as one lady I have heard speak of, which was so subject thereto she could never be cured.

Anent these same swoonings, I have heard tell of a fair lady, which was being embraced by her lover on top of a large chest or coffer. Very suddenly and unavoidably for herself, she did swoon right off in such wise that she did let herself slide behind the coffer with legs projected in the air, and getting so entangled betwixt the coffer and the tapestry of the wall, that while she was yet struggling to free herself and her cavalier helping her, there entered some company and so surprised her in this forked-radish attitude. These had time enough to see all she had,—which was all very pretty and dainty however,—and all the poor woman could do was to cover herself up as best she might, saying so and so had pushed her, as they were playing, behind the coffer, and declaring how that she would never like the fellow again for it.

Cette dame courut bien plus grande fortune qu'une que j'ai ouï dire, laquelle, alors que son ami la tenait embrassée et investie sur le bord de son lit, quand ce vint sur la douce fin qu'il eut achevé et que par trop il s'étendait, il avait par cas des escarpins neufs qui avaient la semelle glissante, et s'appuyant sur des carreaux plombés dont la chambre était pavée, qui sont fort sujets à faire glisser, il vint à se couler et glisser si bien sans se pouvoir arrêter que, du pourpoint qu'il avait, tout recouvert de clinquant, il en écorcha de telle façon le ventre, la motte le cas et les cuisses de sa maitresse que vous eussiez dit que les griffes d'un chat y avaient passé; ce qui cuisait

si fort la dame qu'elle en fit un grand cri et ne s'en put garder ; mais le meilleur fut que la dame, parce que c'était en été et faisait grand chaud, s'était mise en appareil un peu plus lubrique que les autres fois, car elle n'avait que sa chemise bien blanche et un manteau de satin blanc dessus, et les caleçons à part e si bien que le gentilhomme.

The lady told the story to one of her female friends, and the gentleman to one of his comrades. So the thing came to be known, from being again repeated over to others ; for indeed 'twas a right good tale and very meet to provoke mirth.

And no doubt but the ladies, whenas they be alone, among their most privy bosom-friends, do repeat merry tales, everywhit as much as we men-folk do, and tell each other their amorous adventures and all their most secret tricks and turns, and afterward laugh long and loud over the same, making fine fun of their gallants, whenever these be guilty of some silly mistake or commit some ridiculous and foolish action.

Yea ! and they do even better than this. For they do filch their lovers the one from the other, and this sometimes not so much for passion's sake, but rather for to draw from them all their secrets, the pretty games and naughty follies they have practised with them. These they do then turn to their own advantage, whether still further to stir their ardour, or by way of revenge, or to get the better one of the other in their privy debates and wranglings when they be met together.

In the days of this same King Henri III. was made that satire without words consisting of the book of pictures I have spoke of above, of sundry ladies in divers postures and connections with their gallants. 'Twas exceeding

base and scurrilous,—for the which see the above passage wherein I have described the same.

Well! enough said on this matter. I could wish from my heart that not a few evil tongues in this our land of France could be chastened and refrain them from their scandal-making, and comport them more after the Spanish fashion. For no man there durst, on peril of his life, to make so much as the smallest reflection on the honour of ladies of rank and reputation. Nay! so scrupulously are they respected that on meeting them in any place whatsoever, an if the faintest cry is raised of *lugar a las damas*, every man doth lout low and pay them all honour and reverence. Before them is all insolence straitly forbid on pain of death.

Whenas the Empress,<sup>1</sup> wife of the Emperor Charles, made his entry into Toledo, I have heard tell how that the Marquis de Villena, one of the great Lords of Spain, for having threatened an alguasil, which had forcibly hindered him from stepping forward, came nigh being sore punished, because the threat was uttered in presence of the Empress; whereas, had it been merely in the Emperor's, no such great ado would have been made.

The Duc de FERIA being in Flanders, and the Queens Eleanor and Marie taking the air abroad, and their Court ladies following after them, it fell out that as he was walking beside them, he did come to words with an other Spanish knight. For this the pair of them came very nigh to losing their lives,—more for having made such a scandal before the Queen and Empress than for any other cause.

The same befell Don Carlos d'Avalos at Madrid, as Queen Isabelle of France was walking through the town;



and had he not sped instantly into a Church which doth there serve as sanctuary for poor unfortunate folk, he had been straightway put to death. The end was he had to fly in disguise, and leave Spain altogether; and was kept in banishment all his life long and confined in the most wretched islet of all Italy, Lipari to wit.

Court jesters even, which have usually full license of free speech, an if they do assail the ladies, do get somewhat to remember. It did so fall out one time to a Fool called Legat, whom I once knew myself. Queen Elizabeth of France once in conversation speaking of the houses at Madrid and Valladolid, how charming and agreeable these were, did declare she wished with all her heart the two places were so near she could e'en touch one with one foot and the other with the other, spreading her legs very wide open as she said the words. The Fool, who heard the remark, cried, "And I should dearly wish to be in betwixt, *con un carrajo de borrico, para encargar y plantar la raya*,"—that is, "with a fool's cudgel to mark and fix the boundary withal." For this he was soundly whipped in the kitchens. Yet was he well justified in forming such a wish; for truly was she one of the fairest, most agreeable and honourable ladies was ever in all Spain, and well deserving to be desired in this fashion,—only of folk more honourable than he an hundred thousand times.

I ween these fine slanderers and traducers of ladies would dearly love to have and enjoy the same privilege and license the vintagers do possess in the country parts of Naples at vintage time. These be allowed, so long as the vintage dureth, to shout forth any sort of vile word and insult and ribaldry to all that pass that way, coming

and going on the roads. Thus will you see them crying and screaming after all wayfarers and vilifying the same, without sparing any, whether great, middling or humble folk, of what estate soever they be. Nor do they spare,—and this is the merry part on't,—the ladies one whit neither, high-born dames or Princesses or any. Indeed in my day I did there hear of not a few fine ladies, and see them too, which would make a pretext to hie them to the fields on purpose, so as they might pass along the roads, and so hearken to this pretty talk and hear a thousand naughty conceits and lusty words. These the peasants would invent and roll off in plenty, casting up at the great ladies their naughtiness and the shameful ways they did use toward their husbands and lovers, going so far as to chide them for their shameful loves and intimacies with their own coachmen, pages, lackeys and apparitors, which were of their train. Going yet further, they would ask them right out for the courtesy of their company, saying they would assault them roundly and satisfy them better than all the others could. All this they would let out in words of a fine, natural frankness and bluntness, without any sort of glossing or disguising. The ladies had their good laugh and pastime out of the thing, and there an end, making their servants which were with them answer back in the like strain and give as good as they got. The vintage once done and over, there is truce of suchlike language till another year, else would they be brought to book and sore punished.

I am told the said custom doth still endure, and that many folk in France would fain have it observed there also at some season of the year or other, to enjoy in

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security the pleasure of their evil speaking, which they do love so well.

Well! to make an end of the subject, 'tis very meet all ladies be respected of all men, and the secret of their loves and favours duly kept. This is why Pietro Aretino said, that when lovers were come to it, the kisses that man and maid did give each other were not so much for their mutual delight as for to join connection of the mouths together and so make signal betwixt them that they do keep hid the secret of their merry doings. Nay, more! that some lustful and lascivious husbands do in their wantonness show them so free and extravagant in words, as that not content with committing sundry naughty profligacies with their wives, they do declare and publish the same to their boon-companions, and make fine tales out of them. So much so that I have myself known wives which did conceive a mortal repugnance to their husbands for this cause and would even very often refuse them the pleasures they had erst afforded them. They would not have such scandalous things said of them, albeit 'twas but betwixt husband and wife.

M. du Bellay, the poet, in his book of Latin epitaphs called *Les Tombeaux*, which he hath composed, and very fine it is, hath writ one on a dog, that methinks is well worth quoting here, for 'tis writ much in our own manner. It runneth thus:

Latratu fures excepi, mutus amentes.

Sic placui domino, sic placui dominæ.

(By my barking I did drive away thieves, with a quiet tongue I did greet lovers. Thus I did please my master, and thus my mistress.)

Well! if we are so to love animals for discreetness, how much more must we not value men for holding silence? And if we are to take advice on this matter of a courtesan which was one of the most celebrated of former days, and a past mistress in her art, to wit Lamia, here it is. Asked wherein a woman did find most satisfaction in her lover, she replied 'twas when he was discreet in talk and secret as to what he did. Above all else she said she did hate a boaster, one that was forever boasting of what he did not do, yet failing to accomplish what he promised,—two faults, each as bad as the other. She was used to say further: that a woman, albeit ready enough to be indiscreet, would never willingly be called harlot, nor published abroad for such. Moreover she said how that she did never make merry at a man's expense, nor any man at hers, nor did any ever miscall her. A fair dame of this sort, so experienced in love's mysteries, may well give lessons to other women.

Well, well! enough said on these points. Another man, more eloquent than I, might have embellished and ennobled the subject better far. To such I do pass on hereby mine arms and pen.





## SEVENTH DISCOURSE

Concerning married women, widows and maids,—to wit, which of these same be better than the other to love.

### INTRODUCTION



ONE day when I was at the Court of Spain at Madrid, and conversing with a very honourable lady, as is the way at Kings' Courts, she did chance to ask me this question following: *Qual era mayor fuego d'amor, el de la biuda, el de la casada, o de la hija moça,*—"which of the three had the greater heat of love, widow, wife or maid?" After myself had told her mine opinion, she did in turn give me hers in some such terms as these: *Lo que me parece d' esta cosa es que, aunque las moças con el hervor de la sangre, se disponen á querer mucho, no deve ser tanto como lo que quieren las casadas y biudas, con la gran experiencia del negocio. Esta razon debe ser natural, como lo seria la del que, por haver nacido ciego de la perfeccion de la luz, no puede cobdiciar de ella con tanto deseo como el que vio, y fue privado de la vista.*—"What I think on the matter is this: that albeit maids, with all that heat of blood that is theirs, be right well disposed to love, yet do they not love so well as wives and widows. This is because of the great experience of the business the latter have, and the obvious fact that supposing a man born blind, and from

birth robbed of all power of vision, he can never desire the gift so strongly as he that hath sweetly enjoyed the same a while and then been deprived thereof." To which she did presently add this further remark: *Con menos pena se abstiene d' una cosa la persona que nunca supo, que aquella que vive enamorada del gusto pasado*—"How that one could with a lesser ado refrain from a thing one had never tried, than from one already known and loved." Such were the reasons this lady did adduce on this moot point.

Again the respected and learned Boccaccio, among the questions discussed in his *Filicopo*, doth in the ninth treat of this same problem: Which of these three, wife, widow or maid, a man should rather fall in love with, in order the more happily to carry his desire into effect? The author doth answer by the mouth of the Queen he doth there introduce speaking, that although 'tis of course very ill done and against God and one's own conscience to covet a married woman, which is in no sense another's, but subject to her husband, it is natheless far easier to come to the point with her than ever with maid or widow, albeit such love is dangerous,—seeing the more a man doth blow the fire, the more he rouseth it, whereas otherwise it dieth down. Indeed all things do wane in the using, except only wantonness, which doth rather wax. But the widow, which hath been long without such exercise, doth scarce feel it at all, and doth take no more account of love than if she had never been married, and is more heated by memory of the past than by present concupiscence. Also the maid, which hath no knowledge nor experience of what it is, save by imagination, hath but a lukewarm longing therefor. On the other hand

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the married woman, heated more than the others, doth oft desire to come to the point and enjoy this pleasure, in spite of its sometimes bringing on her her husband's sore displeasure manifested in words and eke blows. For all this, fain to be revenged on him (for naught is so vengeful as a woman), as well as for sake of the thing itself, doth the wife make him cuckold right out, and enjoy the desire of her heart. Beside, folk do soon weary of eating ever of the same meat, and for this cause even great Lords and Ladies do often leave good and delicate viands for to take others instead. Moreover, with girls, 'tis a matter of overmuch pains and consumption of time to tame them and bring them round to the will of men; nay! an if they *do* love, they know not that they do. But with widows, the old fire doth readily recover its vigour, very soon making them desire once more what by reason of long discontinuance they had forgot the savour of. Thus they be not slow to come back again to the old delights, only regretting the time wasted and the weary nights of widowhood passed all alone and uncomforted in their cold beds.

In answer to these arguments of the Queen, a certain gentleman named Faramond doth make reply. Leaving married women aside altogether, as being so easy to get the better of without a man's using any great reasoning to persuade them to it, he doth consider the case of maids and widows, maintaining the maid to be more steadfast in love than the widow. For the widow, who hath experienced in the past the secrets of passion, doth never love steadfastly, but always doubtfully and tentatively, quickly changing and desiring now one, now another gallant, never knowing to which she should give herself for

her greater advantage and honour! Nay! sometimes so vacillating is she in her long deliberations she doth choose never an one at all, and her amorous passion can find no steadfast hold whatever. Quite opposite is the maid, he saith, and all such doubts and hesitations be foreign to her. Her one desire is to have a lover true, and after once choosing him well, to give all her soul to him and please him in all things, deeming it the best honour she can do him to be true and steadfast in her love. So being only too ardent for the things which have never yet been seen, heard or proven of her, she doth long far more than other women which have had experience of life, to see, hear and prove all such matters. Thus the keen desire she hath to see new things doth strongly dominate her heart; she doth make enquiries of them that know,—which doth increase her flame yet more. Accordingly she is very eager to be joined with him she hath made Lord of her affections, whereas this same ardour is not in the widow, seeing she hath passed that way already.

Well at the last the Queen in Boccaccio, taking up the word again and wishing to give a final answer to the question, doth thus conclude: That the widow is more painstaking of the pleasure of love an hundred fold than the virgin, seeing the latter is all for dearly guarding her precious virginity and maidenhead. Further, virgins be naturally timid, and above all in this matter, awkward and inept to find the sweet artifices and pretty complaisances required under divers circumstances in such encounters. But this is not so with the widow, who is already well practised, bold and ready in this art, having long ago bestowed and given away what the virgin doth make so much ado about giving. For this cause she hath



no fear of her person being looked at, or her virtue impugned by the discovery of any mark of lapse from honour; and in all respects she doth better know the secret ways for to arrive at her end. Beside all this, the maid doth dread this first assault of her virginity, which in many women is sometimes rather grievous and painful than soft and pleasant, whereas widows have no such fear, but do submit themselves very sweetly and gently, even when the assailant be of the roughest. Now this particular pleasure is quite different from many others, for with them a man is oft satisfied with the first experience and goeth lightly to others, whereas in this the longing to return once more to the same doth ever wax more and more. Accordingly the widow, which doth give least, but giveth it often, is an hundred times more liberal than the maid, when this last doth at length consent to abandon her most precious possession, to the which she doth direct a thousand thoughts and regrets. Wherefore, the Queen doth conclude, 'tis much better for a man to address himself to a widow than to a maid, as being far easier to gain over and corrupt.



## ARTICLE I

### OF THE LOVE OF MARRIED WOMEN



OW to take and further consider these arguments of Boccaccio, and expand them somewhat, and discuss the same, according to the words I have heard spoke of many honourable gentlefolk, both men and women, on these matters,—as the result of ample knowledge and experience, I declare there can be no doubt that any man wishing quickly to have fruition of love, must address him to married ladies, an if he would avoid great trouble and much consumption of time; for, as Boccaccio saith, the more a fire is stirred, the more ardent doth it grow. And 'tis the married woman which doth grow so hot with her husband, that an if he be lacking in the wherewithal to extinguish the fire he doth give his wife, she must needs borrow of another man, or burn up alive. I did once know myself a lady of good birth, of a great and high family, which did one day tell her lover, and he did repeat the tale to me, how that of her natural disposition she was in no wise keen for this pleasure so much as folk would think (and God wot this is keen enough), and was ready and willing many a time to go without, were it not that her husband stirring her up, while yet he was not strong or capable enough to properly assuage her heat, he did make her so fierce and hot she was bound to resort for succour in this pass to her lover. Nay! very often not

getting satisfaction enough of him even, she would withdraw her alone, to her closet or her bed, and there in secrecy would cure her passion as best she might. Why! she declared, had it not been for very shame, she would have given herself to the first she met in a ball-room, in any alcove, or on the very steps, so tormented was she with this terrible feeling. Herein was she for all the world like the mares on the borders of Andalusia, which getting so hot and not finding their stallions there to leap them and so unable to have satisfaction, do set their natural opening against the wind blowing in these plains, which doth so enter in and assuageth their heat and getteth them with foal. Hence spring those steeds of such fleetness we see from those regions, as though keeping some of the fleetness and natural swiftness of the wind their sire. I ween there be husbands enough would be right glad if their wives could find such a wind as this, to refresh them and assuage their heat, without their having to resort to their lovers and give their poor mates most unbecoming horns for their heads.

Truly a strange idiosyncrasy in a woman, the one I have just adduced,—not to burn, but when stirred of another. Yet need we be in no way astonished thereat, for as said a Spanish lady: *Que quanto mas me quiero sacar de la braza, tanto mas mi marido me abraza en el brazero*,—"The more I am for avoiding the embers, the more my husband doth burn me in my brazier." And truly women may well be kindled that way, seeing how by mere words, by touching and embracing alone, even by alluring looks, they do readily allow themselves to be drawn to it, when they find opportunity, without a thought of the consideration they owe their husbands.

For, to tell the real truth, what doth most hinder every woman, wife or maid, from taking of this pleasure again and again is the dread they feel of having their belly swell, without eating beans,—an event married ladies do not fear a whit. For an if they do so swell, why! 'tis the poor husband that hath done it all, and getteth all the credit. And as for the laws of honour which do forbid them so to do, why! Boccaccio doth plainly say the most part of women do laugh at these, alleging for reason and justification: that Nature's laws come first, which doth never aught in vain, and hath given them such excellent members to be used and set to work, and not to be left idle and unemployed. Nature neither forbideth the proper exercise of these nor imposeth disuse on these parts more than on any other; else would the spiders be building their webs there, as I have said in another place, unless they do find brushes meet to sweep them away withal. Beside, from keeping themselves unexercised do very oft spring sore complaints and even dangers to life,—and above all a choking of the womb, whereof so many women die as 'tis pitiful to see, and these right fair and honourable dames. All this for sake of this plaguey continence, whereof the best remedy, say the doctors, is just carnal connection, and especially with very vigorous and well provided husbands. They say further, at any rate some of our fair ones do, that this law of honour is only for them that love not and have got them no true and honourable lovers, in whom no doubt 'tis unbecoming and blameworthy to go sacrifice to the chastity of their body, as if they were no better than courtesans. But such as truly love, and have gotten them lovers well chosen and good, this law of honour doth in no wise forbid them to



help these to assuage the fires that burn them, and give them wherewithal to extinguish the same. This is verily and indeed for women to give life to the suppliant asking it, showing themselves gentle-hearted benefactresses, not savage and cruel tyrants.

This is what Renaldo said, whom I have spoke of in a former discourse, when telling of the poor afflicted Ginevra. As to this, I did once know a very honourable lady and a great one, whom her lover did one day find in her closet, translating that famous stanza of the said Renaldo beginning, *Una donna deve dunque morire*,—"A lady fair was like to die," into French verse, as fair and fairly wrought, as ever I have seen,—for I did see the lines after. On his asking her what she had writ there, she replied: "See, a translation I have just made, which is at once mine own judgment by me delivered, and a sentence pronounced in your favour for to content you in that you desire,—and only the execution doth now remain;" and this last, the reading done, was promptly carried out. A better sentence i'faith than was ever given in the Bailey Court of the Paris Parliament!<sup>1</sup> For of all the fine words and excellent arguments wherewith Ariosto hath adorned Renaldo's speech, I do assure you the lady forgot never an one to translate and reproduce them all well and thoroughly, so as the translation was as meet as ever the original to stir the heart. Thus did she let her lover plainly understand she was ready enough to save his life, and not inexorable to his supplication, while he was no less apt to seize his opportunity.

Why then shall a lady, when that Nature hath made her good and full of pity, not use freely the gifts given her, without ingratitude to the giver, and without resist-

ance and contradiction to her laws? This was the view of a fair lady I have heard speak of, which watching her husband one day walking up and down in a great hall, cannot refrain her from turning to her lover and saying, "Just look at our good man pacing there; has not he the true build of a cuckold? Surely I should have gone sore against dame Nature, seeing she had created him and destined him for this, an if I had contradicted her intent and given her the lie!"

I have heard speak of another lady, which did thus complain of her husband, which did treat her ill and was ever jealously spying on her, suspecting she was making him a set of horns: "Nay! he is too good," she would cry to her lover; "he thinks his fire is a match for mine. Why! I do put his out in a turn of the hand, with four or five drops of water. But for mine, which hath a very different depth of furnace, I do need a flood. For we women be of our nature like dropsical folk or a sandy ditch, which the more water they swallow, the more they want."

Another said yet better, how that a woman was like chickens, which do get the pip and die thereof, if they be stinted of water and have not enough to drink. A woman is the same, which doth breed the pip and oft die thereof, if they are not frequently given to drink; only 'tis something else than spring water it must have. Another fair lady was used to say she was like a good garden, which not content with the rain of heaven only, doth ask water of the gardener as well, to be made more fruitful thereby. Another would say she would fain resemble those good economists and excellent managers which do never give out all their property to be guided and a profit

earned to one agent alone, but do divide it among several hands. One alone could not properly suffice to get good value. After a similar fashion was she for managing herself, to make the best thereof and for herself to reap the highest enjoyment.

I have heard of yet another lady which had a most ill-favoured lover, and a very handsome husband and of a good grace, the lady herself being likewise very well-looking. One of her chiefest lady friends and gossips remonstrating with her and asking why she did not choose a handsomer lover, "Know you not," she said, "that to cultivate well a piece of land more than one labourer is wanted, and as a rule the best-looking and most dainty be not the most meet workers, but the most rustical and hardy?" Another lady I knew, which had a very ill-favoured husband and of a very evil grace, did choose a lover as foul as he; and when one of her friends did ask her the reason why, "'Tis the better," quoth she, "to accustom me to mine husband's ugliness."

Yet another lady, discoursing one day of love, as well her own as that of other fair ladies her companions, said: "An if women were alway chaste, why! they would never know but one side of life,"—herein basing on the doctrine of the Emperor Heliogabalus, who was used to declare, "that one half of a man's life should be employed in virtues, and the other half in vices; else being always in one condition, either wholly good or wholly bad, one could never judge of the opposite side at all, which yet doth oft serve the better to attemper the first." I have known great personages to approve this maxim, and especially where women were concerned. Again the wife of the Emperor Sigismund, who was called Barba, was used to

say that to be forever in one and the same condition of chastity was a fool woman's part, and did much reprove her ladies, wives or maids, which did persist in this foolish opinion, and most surely for her own part did very thoroughly repudiate the same. For indeed all her pleasure lay but in feasts, dances, balls and love-makings, and much mockery was for any which did not the like, or which did fast to mortify the flesh, and were for following a quiet life. I leave you to imagine if it went not well at the Court of this Emperor and Empress,—I mean for all such, men and women, as take joy in love's pleasures.

I have heard speak of a very honourable lady and of good repute, which did fairly fall ill of the love which she bare her lover, yet did never consent to risk the matter, because of this same high law of honour so much insisted on and preached up of husbands. But seeing how day by day she was more and more consumed away and burned up, in such wise that in a twinkling she did behold herself wax dry, lean, and languishing, and from being aforetime fresh, plump and in good case, now all changed and altered, as her mirror informed her, she did at length cry: "Nay! how shall it be said of me that in the flower of mine age, and at the prompting of a mere frivolous point of honour and silly scruple making me overmuch keep in my natural fire, I did thus come to dry up and waste away, and grow old and ugly before my time, and lose all the bloom of my beauty, which did erst make me valued and preferred and loved. Instead of a fair lady of good flesh and bone I am become a skeleton, a very anatomy, enough to make folk banish me and jeer at me in any good company, a laughing-stock to all and sundry. No! I will save me from such a fate; I will use the reme-



dies I have in my power.” And herewith, what she said, she did, and contenting her own and her love’s desires, she soon gat back her flesh again and grew as fair as before,—without her husband’s ever suspecting the remedy she had used, but attributing the cure to the doctors, whom he did greatly honour and warmly thank for having so restored his wife to health for his better profit and enjoyment.

I have heard speak of another great lady, one of a merry humour and a pretty wit, to whom, being sick, her physician did one day declare how that she would never be well, unless she changed her habits. Hereupon she answered straight, “Well then! let us do it.” So the physician and she did take one with the other joy of heart and body. One day she said to him, “People all declare you do it for me; but there, ’tis all one, as I am so much better. And all ever I can, I will go on doing it,—as mine health doth depend on it.”

These two dames last spoke of were quite unlike that honourable lady of Pampeluna in Spain, whom I have already mentioned in a previous passage, and who is described in the *Cent Nouvelles* of the Queen of Navarre. This lady, being madly in love with M. d’Avannes, did think it better to hide her flame, and keep hid in her bosom the passion that was consuming her, and die thereof, than lose her honour. But by what I have heard sundry honourable lords and ladies say in discussing the matter, she was a fool for her pains, and little regardful of her soul’s salvation, seeing she did bring about her own death, it being in her power to avoid this extremity, and all for a trifle. For in very fact, as an old French proverb doth put it, “*D’une herbe de pré tondue et d’un c... f...*,”

*le dommage est bientôt rendu.*" And what is it, when all is done? The business, once done, is like any other; what sign is there of it to men's eyes? Doth the lady walk any the less upright? doth the world know aught? I mean of course when 'tis done in secret, with closed doors, and no man by to see. I would much like to know this, if many of the great ladies of mine own acquaintance, for 'tis with such love doth most take up abode (as this same lady of Pampeluna saith, 'tis at high portals that high winds do beat), if these do therefore cease to walk abroad with proudly lifted head, whether at this Court of France or elsewhere, and show them as unabashed as ever a Bradamant or Marfisa of them all. And pray, who would be so presumptuous as to ask them if they condescend to it? Even their husband (I tell you), the most of them at any rate, would never dare to charge them with it, so well do they understand the art of concealment and the keeping of a confident show and carriage. But an if these same husbands, any of them, do think to speak thereof and threaten them, or punish them with harsh words or deeds, why! they be undone; for then, even though before they had planned no ill against them, yet do they straightway plot revenge and give them back as good as they have gotten. For is there not an old proverb which saith, "When and so soon as a husband doth beat his wife, her body doth laugh for joy"? That is to say, it doth presently look for good times, knowing the natural bent of its mistress, who unable to avenge her wrongs by other weapons, will turn it to account as second and best ally, to pay her husband back with her lover's help, no matter what watch and ward the poor man keep over her.

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For verily, to attain their end, the most sovran means they have is to make their complaints to one another, or to their women and maids of the chamber, and so win these over to get them new lovers, if they have none, or an if they have, to convey these privily to places of assignation; and 'tis they which do mount guard that neither husband nor any other surprise them at it. Thus then do these ladies gain over their maids and women, bribing them with presents and good promises. In certain cases beside they do make agreement and composition with these, on the terms that of all the lover may give their lady mistress, the servant shall have the half or at least the third part thereof. But the worst is, very often the mistresses do deceive their servants, taking the whole for themselves, making excuse that their lover hath given them no more than so small a share as that they have not enough to spare aught for others. Thus do they hoax these poor wenches and serving maids, albeit they stand sentinel and keep good watch. This is a sore injustice; and I ween, were the case to be tried with proper arguments pleaded on this side and that, 'twould afford occasion for much merriment and shrewd debate. For 'tis verily theft, no less, so to filch their benefices and emoluments duly agreed upon. Other ladies there be however who do keep faithfully their promise and compact, and hold back naught, for to be the better served and loyally helped, herein copying those honest shop-keepers, who do render a just proportion of the gain and profit of the talent their master or partner hath entrusted them withal. And truly such dames do deserve to be right well served, seeing they be duly grateful for the trouble, and good watch and ward of their inferiors. And these last

do run many risks and perils,—as one I wot of, who keeping guard one day, the while her mistress was with her lover and having merry times, both the twain being right well occupied, was caught by the husband's house-steward. The man did chide her bitterly for what she was at, saying 'twere more becoming for her had she been with her mistress than to be playing procuress like this and standing sentinel outside her door. 'Twas a foul trick she was playing her mistress' husband, and he would go warn him. However the lady did win him over by means of another of her maids, of whom he was enamoured and who did promise him some favour at her mistress' prayers; beside, she did make him a present, and he was at last appeased. Natheless she did never like him afterward, and kept a shrewd eye on his doings; finally spying an opportunity and taking it on the hop, she did get him dismissed by her husband.

I wot of a fair and honourable lady, which did take a serving maid of hers into great intimacy and high favour and friendship, even allowing her much intimacy, having trained her well for such intercourse. So free was she with her mistress that sometimes when she did see this lady's husband longtime absent from his house, engaged either at Court or on some journey, oft would she gaze at her mistress as she was dressing her, (and she was one of the most beautiful and lovable women of her day), and presently remark: "Ah, me! is he not ill-starred, Madam, that husband of yours, to possess so fair a wife, and yet have to leave her thus all alone so long without ever setting eyes on her? Doth he not deserve you should cuckold him outright? You really ought; and if I were as handsome as you, I should do as much to mine hus-



band, if he tarried so much away." I leave you to judge if the lady and mistress of this serving maid did find this a tasty nut to crack, especially finding as she did shoes all ready to her feet, whereof she did after make good use, freely employing so handy an instrument.

Again, there be ladies which do make use of their serving maids to help them hide their amours and prevent their husbands observing aught amiss, and do give them charge of their lovers, to keep and hold them as their own suitors, under this pretext to be able at any time to say, if the husbands do find them in their wives' chambers, that they be there as paying court to such or such an one of their maids. So under this cloak hath the lady a most excellent means of playing her game, and the husband know naught at all about it. I knew a very great Prince indeed which did set him to pay court to a lady of the wardrobe to a great Princess, solely to find out the secret intrigues of her mistress, and so the better gain success in that quarter.

I have seen plenty of these tricks played in my lifetime, though not altogether in the fashion followed by a certain honourable lady of the world I once knew, which was so fortunate as to be loved of three brave and gallant gentlemen, one after the other. These on quitting her, did presently after love and serve a very great lady, whereon she did very pleasantly and good-humouredly deliver herself to this effect. 'Twas she, she said, who had so trained and fashioned them by her excellent lessons, as that coming now into the service of the said great Princess, they were exceeding well formed and educated. To rise so high, she declared, 'twas very needful first to serve smaller folk, in order not to fail with greater; for to arrive at any su-

preme degree of skill, a man must needs mount first by small and low degrees, as is seen in all arts and sciences.

This did her great honour. Yet more deserving still was another I have heard tell of, which was in the train of a great lady. This lady was married, and being surprised by her husband in her chamber receiving a little paper note or *billet doux* from her lover, was right well succoured by her subordinate. For this last, cleverly intercepting the note, did swallow down the same at one gulp without making any bones about it and without the husband perceiving aught, who would have treated his wife very ill indeed, if he had once seen the inside. This was a very noble piece of service, and one the great lady was always grateful for.

On the other hand I wot well of ladies which have found them in evil case for having overmuch trusted their serving maids, and others again for not having trusted them at all. I have heard speak of a fair and honourable lady, who had taken and chose out a gentleman, one of the bravest, most valiant and well accomplished of all France, to give the same pleasure and delight of herself. She would never trust any one of her women, and assignation being given in a friend's house, it was concerted and arranged there should be but one bed in the chamber, her women all sleeping in the antechamber. As settled, so done. And as there was a cat's-hole in the door, which they had not remembered or provided for till the moment, they bethought them to stop this with a thin board, to the end that if any pushed it down, it would make a rattle, which they would hear and could take measures accordingly. One of her women, suspecting a snake in the grass, and angry and hurt because her mistress had not con-

fided in her, whom she had ever made her chiefest confidante, and had given many proofs thereof, doth now make up her mind, so soon as her mistress was to bed, to keep a look out and listen at the door. She could hear quite well a low murmuring, yet was sure 'twas not the reading aloud her mistress had for some days indulged in in bed, with a candle, the better to dissemble what she was going to do. Just as she was on the tip-toe of curiosity, to know more, an excellent occasion did present itself most opportunely. For a kitten happening to come into the room, she and her companions take the animal and push it through the cat's-hole into her mistress' chamber, not of course without knocking down the board that kept it closed and making a clatter. At this the pair of lovers, sore startled, did suddenly sit up in bed, and saw by the light of their candle 'twas only a cat that had come in and knocked down the board. Wherefore without troubling more about it, they laid them down again, seeing 'twas now late and everybody presumably asleep, but never shut to again the cat's-hole, leaving the same open for the cat to go out again by, as they did not care to have it shut up in their room all night long. Seizing so good an opportunity, the said waiting maid and her companions had a fine chance to see enough and to spare of their mistress' doings. These they did after reveal to the husband, whence came death for the lover, and shame and disgrace for the lady.

This is what doth come of despite and want of confidence shown folk, which be often just as productive of ill consequences as over-confidence. I have heard of a very great nobleman which was moved one time to take all his wife's waiting-maids (and she was a well-born and very

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fair lady), and have them tortured to make them confess all their misdeeds and the services they had rendered her in her amours. However his first intent was carried no further, to avoid too horrible a scandal. The first suggestion came from a lady whose name I will not give, who had a grudge against the said great lady. For the which God did punish her later.





## ARTICLE II

### OF THE LOVE OF MAIDS

#### 1.



O now, following the order of Boccaccio, our guide in this discourse, I come next to maids. These, it must certainly be allowed, be of their nature exceeding timid at first beginning, and dare in no wise yield up what they hold so dear, spite of the constant persuasion and advice their fathers, mothers, kinsfolk and mistresses do give them, along with most moving threats. So it is that, though they should have all the good will thereto in the world, yet they do deny themselves all ever they can; beside they have ever before their eyes the terror lest their bodies do play them false and betray them, else would they try many a tasty morsel. Yet all have not this scrupulousness; for shutting their eyes to all reflection, some do rush boldly into it,—not indeed with head down, but rather thrown well back. Herein do they make a sore mistake, seeing how terrible is the scandal of a maid deflowered, and of a thousandfold more import than for married woman or widow. For a maid, this treasure of hers once lost, is made the object of endless scandal and abuse, is pointed at by all men, and doth lose many a good opportunity of marriage. For all this, I have

known not a few cases where some rough fellow or other hath been found, either willingly, or of sudden caprice, knowingly or unwittingly, on compulsion, to go throw himself into the breach, and marry them, as I have described elsewhere, all tarnished as they were, but right glad to get them churched after all.

Many such of either sex have I known in my day, and in especial one maid which did most shamefully let herself be got with child by a great Prince, and that without an attempt at hiding or dissembling her condition. On being discovered, all she said was this: "What was I to do? 'tis not my frailty you must blame, nor my lustfulness, but only my over heedlessness and lack of foresight. For an if I had been as clever and knowing as the most part of my companions, which have done just as ill as I, or even worse, but have had wit enough to cure their pregnancy or conceal their lying-in, I should not now be in this strait, nor had any known a word about it." Her companions did for this word wish her mighty ill; and she was accordingly expelled the band by her mistress, albeit 'twas reported this same mistress had ordered her to yield to the wishes of the Prince, wishing to get an hold over him and win him to herself. For all this, however, the girl failed not some while after to make a good match and contract a rich marriage, and presently give birth to a noble offspring. Thus we see, an if the poor child had been as wily as her comrades and other girls, this luck had never been hers. And truly in my day I have seen mere girls as clever and expert in these matters as ever the oldest married woman, nay! going so far as to be most effective and experienced procuresses, and not content with their own satisfaction

only, to be after contriving the same delights for others to boot.

'Twas a lady in waiting at the French Court which did invent and have performed that fine Comedy entitled the *Paradis d'Amour* (Paradise of Love) in the Salle de Bourbon with closed doors, at which performance were none but actors and actresses present, forming players and audience both together. Such as do know the story will know what I mean. The play had six characters, three male and three female. Of these one was a Prince, who had his fair one, a great lady, though not too great neither, yet did he love her dearly; the second was a Lord, who did intrigue with the great Lady, a lady very liberal of her favours; the third was a simple gentleman, who did carry on with the maid, whom he did marry later. For the gallant authoress was fain to see her own character represented on the stage no less than the rest! Indeed 'tis ever so with the author of a Comedy; he doth put himself in the play, or else in the prologue. And so did this one, and on my faith, girl as she was, did play the part as well as the married women, if not better. The fact is she had seen more of the world than just her own country, and as the Spaniards say *rafinada en Secobia*,—had had a Segovia polish or fining. This is a proverb in Spain, Segovia being where the best cloths are fined.

I have heard tales told of many maids, who while serving their lady mistresses as *Dariolettes*, or confidantes, have been fain to taste and try the same dainties. Such ladies moreover be often slaves in their own women's hands, from dread of their discovering them and publishing abroad their amours, as I have noted above. 'Twas

a lady in waiting who did one day tell me her opinion,—that 'twas a mighty piece of folly for maids to sacrifice their honour to their passions, and while some silly creatures were restrained therefrom by their scruples, for herself she would not deign to do it, the whole thing ending in mere shame and disgrace. On the other hand the trick of keeping one's affair privy and secret made all right, and girls were mere fools and unfit for this wicked world which cannot help themselves and manage the thing quietly.

A Spanish lady, thinking her daughter was afraid of the violence of the first wedding night, went to her and began to encourage her and persuade her 'twas naught at all and she would feel no pain, adding that herself would be right glad to be in her place the better to show her how to bear it. To this the girl replied, *Bezo las manos, señora madre, de tal merced, que bien la tomaré yo por mi*,—"Much thanks, my lady mother, for your kind offer, but I will manage very well by myself."

I have heard a merry tale of a girl of very high birth, who had contrived to afford herself much pleasure in her life so far, and whom her family now spake of marrying in Spain. One of her most special and privy friends said one day to her, by way of jest, how surprised he was to find that she, which had so dearly loved the *rising* quarter, was now about to travel toward the setting or western, because Spain lies to the westward. To this the lady made answer, "Truly, I have heard mariners say, men that have travelled far, how that the navigation of the rising quarter is right pleasant and agreeable; and indeed myself have steered many a time thither by the compass I do alway carry on me. So I will take advan-



tage of this same instrument, when I am in the land of the setting sun, yet to hie away me straight to the rising." Judicious commentators will find it easy enough to interpret the allegory and make a shrewd guess at what I point to. I leave you to judge by these words whether the damsel had invariably limited her reading to the "hours" of Our Lady, and none other.

Another damsel I have heard of, and could give her name, who hearing of the wonders of the city of Venice, its singular beauties and the liberties there enjoyed of all, and especially of harlots and courtesans, did exclaim to one of her bosom friends, "I would to God we had despatched thither all our wealth by letter of credit, and were there arrived ourselves for to lead the gay and happy existence of its courtesans, a life none other can come near, even though we were Empresses of all the whole world!" Truly a good wish and an excellent! And in very deed I opine they that be fain of such a life could hardly dwell in a better spot.

No less do I admire another wish, expressed by a lady of former days. She was questioning a poor slave escaped from the Turks as to the tortures and sufferings these did inflict on him and other unhappy Christian captives, who did tell her enough and to spare of cruelties so inflicted of every sort and kind. Presently she did ask him what they did to women. "Alas and alas! Madam," said he, "they do it to them, and go on doing it, till they die."—"Well! I would to God," she cried, "I might die so, a martyr to the faith."

Three great Ladies, of whom one was a maid, being together one day, as I am told, did begin telling their wishes. One said, "I would fain have an apple-tree that

should bear every year as many golden apples as it doth common fruit." The second, "I would have a meadow that should yield me jewels and precious stones as many as it doth flowers." The third, which was a maid, "And I would choose a dovecote, whereof the openings should be worth as much to me as such and such a lady's coop, such and such a great King's favourite, whose name I will not speak; only I should like mine to be visited of more pigeons than is hers."

These dames were of a different complexion from a certain Spanish lady, whose life is writ in the History of Spain, and who, one day when Alfonzo the Great, King of Aragon, made a state entry into Saragossa, threw herself on her knees before his Majesty to ask justice of him. The King signifying his willingness to hear her, she did ask to speak to him in private, and he did grant her this favour. Hereupon she laid a complaint against her husband, for that he would lie with her two and thirty times a month, by day no less than a-nights, in such wise that he gave her never a minute of rest or respite. So the King did send for the husband and learned of him 'twas true, the man deeming he could not be in the wrong seeing it was his own wife; then the King's council being summoned to deliberate on the matter, his Majesty did issue decree and ordered that he should touch her but six times,—not without expressing his much marvel at the exceeding heat and puissance of the fellow, and the extraordinary coldness and continence of the wife, so opposite to the natural bent of other women (so saith the story), which be ever ready to clasp hands and beseech their husbands or other men to give them enough of it, and do make sore complaint

an if these do give to others what is their share by rights.

Very different from this last was another lady, a young girl of a good house, who the day after her wedding, recounting over to her companions her adventures in the night just done, "What!" cried she, "and is that all? For all I had heard some of you say, and other women, and men to boot, which do boast them so bold and gallant, and promise such mountains of wondrous deeds, why! o' my faith, friends and comrades mine, the man (meaning her husband), that made himself out so hot a lover and valiant a wight, and so fine a runner at the ring, did run but four all counted,—as it were the regular three for the ring and one for the ladies." We can but suppose, as she made such complaint of scanty measure, she would fain have had a round dozen to her share; but everyone is not like the Spanish gentleman of our last story.

This is how they do make mock of their husbands. So one, who when just wed on her first marriage night, did play the prude and was for obstinately resisting her husband. But he did bethink him to declare that, and if he had to take his big dagger, 'twould be another game altogether, and she would have something to cry out for; whereat the child, fearing the big weapon he did threaten her withal, did yield her instantly to his wishes. But next time, she was no longer afeared, and not content with the little one, did ask at first go off for the big one he had threatened her with the night before. To which the husband replied he had never a big one, and had said so but in jest; so she must e'en be satisfied with what little provision he had about him. Then she cried, "Nay! 'tis very ill done, so to make mock of poor, simple

maids!" I wot not whether we should call this damsel simple and ignorant, and not rather knowing and artful, as having tried the thing before. I do refer the question to the learned for decision.

Bien plus estait simple une antre fille, laquelle s'estant plaincte à la justice que un gallant l'ayant prise par force, et lui enquis sur ce fait, il respondit: "Messieurs, je m'en rapporte à elle s'il est orai, et si elle i'a pris mon cas et l'a mis de sa main propre dans lie sien.—Ha! Messieurs, (dit la fille) il est bien orai cela, mais qu'il ne l'enst fait? Car, amprès qu'il m'ent couchée et trousée, il me mit sou cas roide et poinctu comme un baston contre la ventre, et m'en domisit de si grands coups que j'ens peur qu'il me le percast et m'y fist im trou. Dame! je lui pris ahers et le mis dans le tron qui estoit tout fait." Si cette fille estoit simplette, on le contrefaisoit, j m'en rapporte.

I will now tell a couple of stories of two married women, of as great a simplicity as the last,—or, if you prefer it so, of as great artfulness. The first was a very great lady of mine acquaintance, a very fine woman and much sought after for this reason. One day a very great Prince did make offers to her, pressing her right eagerly and promising her very fine and most advantageous conditions, rank and riches without end for herself and her husband, so much so that she did hearken at first and give a willing ear to such seductive temptations. However she would not right off consent, but in her simplicity as a new made wife, knowing naught of the wicked world, she did come and reveal the whole matter to her husband, asking his advice whether she should do it or



no. The husband firing up instantly, cried, "Never, never, by God! little wife; what are you talking about, what would you be at? 'Tis a foul deed, an irreparable stain on both of us!"—"But, Sir," returned the lady, "we shall both be such grand folk, no one will have a word to say against us." In a word the husband did refuse absolutely; but the lady, beginning presently to pluck up a spirit and understand the world, was loath to lose the chance, and did take her fling with the said Prince and others beside, quite forgetting her erstwhile simpleness. I have heard the story told by one which had it of the Prince in question. The lady too had confided it to him; and he had chid her, counselling her that in such affairs one should never consult the husband, who was of necessity a prejudiced party.

Not less simple-minded, or very little, was another young married dame I have heard of, to whom one day an honourable gentleman did proffer his love, at the husband's very elbow, who for the moment was holding discourse with another lady. The suitor did suddenly put *son instrument entre les mains Elle le prit et, le serrant fort étroitement et se tournant vers son mari, lui dit: "Mon mari, voyez le beau présent que me fait ce gentil-homme; le recevrai-je? dites-le-moi." Le pauvre gentil-homme, étonné, retire à soi son épervier de si grande rudesse que, recontrant une pointe de diamant qu'elle avait au doigt, le lui esserta de telle façon d'un bout à l'autre qu'elle le crut perdre du tout*, and suffered very great pain and even came in danger of his life. He rushed frantically from the room, watering all the place with his gore which flowed in torrents. The husband

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made no ado about running after him to utter any recriminations on the matter; all he did was to burst out a-laughing heartily, at once at the simplicity of his poor little wife, and because the fellow was so soundly punished.

Well! here is a village story I must needs tell, for 'tis not a bad one. A village wench, as they were leading her to church on her wedding-day to the sound of tabor and flute, and with much rustic ceremony, chancing to catch sight of her girlhood's lover, did shout out these words to him, "Farewell, Pierre, farewell! I've got . . . You'll never give it me any more. My mother's married me now,"—blurting the word right out. Her simplicity was no less admirable than the soft regret she showed for past days.

One more, as we are on village tales. A pretty young girl took a load of wood to sell at the market town. Asked how much, she kept continually raising her price at each offer made her by the dealers. "You shall have so much," they cried, "and something else into the bargain."—" 'Tis well said," she cried, "and thank you! you're the very man."

Right simple-minded wenches these, and very different, they and their like, (for there be plenty such), from a whole host of others in this wicked world, which be far more double-dealing and knowing than these, never asking counsel of their husbands nor never showing them such presents as they may get.

I heard an anecdote once in Spain of a young girl who the first night after her marriage, as her husband was struggling and sweating sore and hurting himself in his attempts, did set up a laugh and tell him, *Señor, bien es*

*razon que seays martyr, pues que io soy virgen; mas pues que io tomo la paciencia, bien la podeys tomar,—*“Sir, ’tis but right you should be a martyr, since I am a virgin; but as I am so patient, you must be patient too.” Thus in revenge of his making fun of his wife, did she make fine fun of him. And in good sooth many a girl hath good cause to make mock at such a time, especially when they have learned afore what it all is, or have been informed of others, or have themselves dreamed and pictured out this mighty moment of delight, which they do suppose so great and lasting.

Another Spanish bride, telling over next morning her husband’s merits, found several to praise, “only” she added, “*que no era buen contador aritmetico, porque no sabia multiplicar,—*that he was not a good arithmetician at all, for he couldn’t multiply.”

Another young maid of good birth and family (one myself have known and talked with), on her wedding night, when all the company were listening outside the door according to custom, and the husband had just given her the first embrace, and as he did rest a while, though not yet asleep, asked her if she would like some more of the same, “An if it please you, Sir!” she said. Imagine the gallant bridegroom’s astonishment at such an answer, and how he must have rubbed his ears.

Maids which do say such tricky things so readily and so soon after marriage, may well rouse strange suspicions in their poor husbands’ breasts, and lead them to suppose they be not the first that have dropped anchor in their bay, nor will be the last so to do. For we cannot doubt, an if a man do not strive hard and nigh kill himself to work well his wife, she will soon bethink her of giving

him a pair of pretty horns, or as an old French proverb put it,

Et qui ne la contente pas,  
Va ailleurs chercher son repas.

Yet when a woman doth get all ever she can out of a man, she doth knock him clean over, just doing him to death. 'Tis an old saying: A woman should not take of a lover all she would have, but must spare him what she can; not so with an husband, him she should drain to the very bones. And this is why, as the Spanish saw hath it, *que el primero pensamiento de la muger, luego que es casada, es de embiudarse*.—"A married woman's first thought is to contrive to make herself a widow." This saying is not universally true, as I do hope to show in another place; it doth only apply to some women, and not all.

Some girls there be which, when no longer able to restrain themselves, be ready to give themselves only to Princes and great Lords, folk very meet to stir their passion, both by reason of their gracious condescension and the fine presents they make, as well as for love of their good looks and pretty ways, for indeed all is fine and point-device, though they may be silly coxcombs and no more, as myself have seen some. Other girls again do not seek after such at all, but do rather avoid them all they can, because they have something of a repute for being scandal-mongers, great boasters, indiscreet and garrulous. They do prefer instead simple gentlemen of prudent and discreet complexion, but alas! the number of such is very small. Happy she who doth meet with such an one! To avoid all these inconveniences, girls do



choose, (at least some do) their men-servants, some being handsome men, some not,—and I have myself known ladies which have acted so. Nor doth it take much urgency to persuade the fellows; for putting them to bed and getting them up as they do, undressing them, putting their foot-gear on and off, and even changing their shifts, —and I have seen many young girls at Court and elsewhere which did make no sort of difficulty or scruple about all this,—seeing so many pretty sights as they must, they cannot but feel temptation. And I ween some of their mistresses do of set purpose let them see their charms freely. The end can only be that, when the eyes have done their office, other senses be presently called in to execute theirs.

I knew once a fair damsel of the great world, a beauty if ever there was one, which did make her man-servant share her with a great Prince, who kept her as his mistress and supposed he was the only happy possessor of her favours. But herein the valet marched step by step with him; and indeed she had made no ill choice, so handsome a man was he and of so fine a figure; indeed, no difference was to be noted. In fact the valet did have the advantage of the Prince in many beauties of person; and the latter knew never a word about the intimacy till he finally quitted the lady on his marriage. Nor did he for this treat the man any the worse, but was always glad to see him; and whenever he caught sight of him in passing, he would merely cry, “Is it possible now this fellow was my rival? Well, well! I can quite believe it, for barring my rank, he hath the better of me otherwise.” He bore the same name as the Prince, and was a most excellent tailor, one of the most famous at Court. There

was hardly a woman there, single or married, but he did dress them, when they were for exquisite costumes. I cannot tell whether he was used to dress them in the same fashion he dressed his mistress, but they were invariably well put on.

I knew once a young girl of a good house, which had a boy lackey of only fourteen, whom she had made her fool and plaything. Amid their plays and foolings, she did make no kind of difficulty whatever to let him kiss her, as privily as it had been only a woman,—and this very often before company, excusing it all by saying he was her pretty fool and little playmate. I wot not whether he went further, but I do know that afterward, as wife and widow, and wife once more, she was ever a most notable whore. Remember how she did kindle her match at this first fire, so that she did never after lack flame in any of her later and greater passions and escapades. I had tarried a good year before I saw this lady; but when I did behold her at home and with her mother, who had the repute of being one of the most accomplished of sham prudes of her day, laughing and making light of the whole thing, I did foresee in a moment how this little game would lead to a more serious one, and one played in downright earnest, and that the damsel would one day grow a very glutton at it, as was afterward the case.

I knew two sisters of a very good old family in Poitou, and both unmarried, of whom strange tales were told, and particularly with regard to a tall Basque footman of their father's. This fellow, under pretext of his fine dancing, (for he could dance not only his native *brawls*, but all the other dances as well), would commonly take

them out to dance and teach them the steps and be partner to them. Later he did teach them the harlot's reel, and they gat themselves finely talked about. Still they found no difficulty in getting husbands, for they were very wealthy folk; and this word wealth covereth up all defects, so as men will pick up anything, no matter how hot and scalding. I knew the said Basque afterward as a good soldier and brave man, and one that showed he had had some training. He was dismissed his place, to avoid scandal, and became a soldier in the Guard in M. d'Estrozze's regiment.

I knew likewise another great house, and a noble, the lady mistress whereof did devote herself to bringing up young maids of birth in her household, amongst others sundry kinswomen of her husband's. Now the lady being very sickly and a slave to doctors and apothecaries, there was always plenty of these to be found thereabouts. Moreover young girls be subject to frequent sicknesses, such as pallors, anæmia, fevers and the like, and it so happened two of them fell ill of a quartan ague, and were put under the charge of an apothecary to cure them. And he did dose them well with his usual drugs and medicines; but the best of all his remedies was this, that he did sleep with one of them,—the presumptuous villain, for he had to do with as fair and honourable a maid as any in France, and one a great King had been well content to enjoy; yet must Master Apothecary have his will of her.

Myself knew the damsel, who did certainly deserve a better lover. She was married later, and given out for virgin,—and virgin she was found to be. Herein did she show her cunning to some purpose; for *car, puisqu'elle*

*ne pouvait tenir son eau, elle s'adressa à celui qui donnait les antidotes pour engarder d'engrosser, car c'est ce que les filles craignent le plus: dont en cela il y en a de si experts qui leur donnent des drogues qui les engardent très bien d'engrosser; ou bien, si elles engrossent, leur font écouler leur grossesse so subtilement et si sagement que jamais on ne s'en aperçoit, et n'en sent-on rien que le vent.*

*Ainsi que j'en ai ouï parler d'une fille, laquelle avait été autrefois nourrie fille de la feue reine de Navarre Marguerite. Elle vint par cas fortuné, ou à engrosser sans qu'elle y pensât pourtant. Elle rencontra un rusé apothicaire, qui, lui ayant donné un breuvage, lui fit évader son fruit, qui avait déjà six mois, pièce par pièce, morceau par morceau, si aisément, qu'étant en ses affaires jamais elle n'en sentit ni mal ni douleur; et puis après se maria galamment, sans que le mari y connut aucune trace; car on leur donne des remèdes pour se faire paraître vierges et pucelles comme auparavant, ainsi que j'en ai allégué un au DISCOUPS DES COCUS. Et un que j'en ai ouï dire à un empirique ces jours passés, qu'il faut avoir des sangsues et les mettre à la nature, et faire par là tirer et sucer le sang: lesquelles sangsues, en suçant, laissent et engendrent de petites ampoules et fistules pleines de sang; si bien que le galant mari, qui vient le soir des noces les assaillir, leur crève ces ampoules d'où le sang sort, et lui et elle s'ensanglantent, qui est une grande joie à l'un et à l'autre; et par ainsi, l'honor della citella è salva. Je trouve ce remède plus souverain que l'autre, s'il est vrai; et s'ils ne sont bons tous deux, il y en a cent autres qui sont meilleurs, ainsi que le savent très bien ordonner, inventer et appliquer ces messieurs les médecins savants et experts apothicaires. Viola pour-*



*quoi ces messieurs ont ordinairement de très belles et bonnes fortunes, car ils savent blesser et remédier, ainsi qui fit la lance de Pélidas.*

Myself knew the Apothecary I spake of but now, as to whom I will add only one word more in passing,—how I saw him at Geneva the first time I did visit Italy, for at that time the common road for French travellers thither was by Switzerland and the Grisons, because of the wars then raging. He came to see me at my lodging. Of a sudden I did ask him what he was doing in that town, and whether he was there to medicine pretty girls, the same as he had done in France. He answered me he was there to repent of such misdoings. “What!” said I, “you have not such dainty bits to taste here as you had there?”—“Ah! Sir,” he replied, “’tis because God hath called me, and I am enlightened of his spirit, and I have now knowledge of his Holy Word.”—“Yes! yes!” I went on, “in those days too you were a pious Protestant, and did combine medicine for the body and for the soul, preaching to the girls and giving them some fine instruction.”—“But, my dear Sir, I do know my God better these days,” he returned again, “than then, and would fain sin no more.” I need not repeat much other discourse we had on this subject, both seriously and in jest; but the impudent scamp did certainly enjoy that pretty bit of flesh, more meet for some gallant gentleman than for such as he. It was as well for him he did quit that house pretty smartly; else had he fared ill. However, enough of this. Cursed be the fellow, for the hate and envy I do bear him,—as did M. de Ronsard to a physician which was used to come night and morning rather to see the poet’s mistress, and feel her breasts and bosom and

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rounded arm, than to medicine her for the fever she had. He writ a very charming sonnet on the subject; 'tis in the second book of his *Amours*, and begins thus:

Hé que je porte et de hayne et d'envie  
Au médecin qui vient et matin,  
Sans nul propos, tastonner le tétin,  
Le sein, le ventre et les flancs de ma mye.

I do bear a like fierce jealousy against a physician which did similarly toward a fair and noble lady I was enamoured of, and from whom I never gat any such privileges and familiarities, though I had loved them better than the winning of a little kingdom. These gentry are for sure exceeding agreeable to dames and damsels, and do have fine adventures with them, an if they seek after such. I have known two physicians at Court, one M. Castellan, physician to the Queen Mother, the other the Seigneur Cabrian, physician to M. de Nevers, and who had held the same office with Ferdinand de Gonzague. Both have enjoyed successes with women, by all one hears, that the greatest noblemen at Court would have sold their souls to the devil for to have gone shares with them.

We were discoursing one day, the late Baron de Vitaux and myself, with M. Le Grand, a famous physician of Paris, a man of agreeable manners and excellent counsel, he having come to visit the said Baron, who was ill of some amorous indiscretion. Both of us questioning him on sundry little ways and peculiarities of the ladies, he did entertain us finely, and told us a round dozen of tales that did verily take the prize. So engrossed did he grow

herewith, that, nine o'clock striking, he cried, getting up from the chair where he was seated: "Truly, I am a greater simpleton than you two, which have kept me here two good hours chattering with you rascals, and all the while I have been forgetting six or seven sick folk I am bound to go visit." So with a word of farewell, he doth hie him away, though not without a further last word in reply to us, when we called after him: "Rascal yourself, Doctor! Oh! you doctors know some fine things and do 'em too, and you especially, for you talk like a past master of the art." He answered us, looking down, "True enough, true enough! we both know and do some fine doings, for we do possess sundry secrets not open to all the world. But I'm an old man now, and have bid a long farewell to Venus and her boy. Nowadays I leave all this to you younger rascals."

## 2.



WE read in the life of St. Louis, in the History of Paulus Aemilius, of a certain Marguerite, Countess of Flanders, sister of Jeanne, daughter of Baldwin I., Emperor of the Greeks, and his successor, seeing she had no children,—so says History. She was given in her early girlhood a teacher named Guillaume, a man esteemed of an holy life and who had already taken minor orders. Yet did this in no wise hinder him to get two children of his fair pupil, which were christened Baldwin and John, and all so privily as that few folk knew aught of the matter. The two boys were later declared legitimate by the Pope. What fine teaching, and what a teacher! So much for History.

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I knew a great Lady at Court which had the repute of being over familiar with her reader and teacher,—so much so indeed that one day Chicot, the King's jester, did openly reproach her therewith in presence of his Majesty and many other personages of the Court, asking her if she were not ashamed to have herself loved (saying the word right out) of so ugly and base a loon as yonder fellow, and if she had not wit to choose a better man. The company hereon began to laugh uproariously and the lady to weep, supposing that the King had abetted the game; for strokes of the sort were quite in character with his usual play. Other very great ladies and high Princesses I have known, which every day would amuse themselves with making their Secretaries, whom I have likewise known, write, or rather pretend to write, and have fine games. Or if they did not call for them to write, having naught to say, then would they make them read aloud, for to give a better colour to the whole thing, declaring how reading themselves did weaken their sight.

Great ladies which do make choice of suchlike paramours be quite inexcusable and most blameworthy, seeing they have their liberty of action, and full freedom and opportunity to choose whom they will. But poor girls which be abject slaves of father and mother, kinsfolk and guardians and mistresses, and timid to boot, are constrained to pick up any stone they can find for their purpose, never thinking whether it be cold or hot, roast or boiled. And so, according as occasion offer, they do generally resort to their men-servants, to their school-master and teacher, to fellows of the artist craft, lute-players, fiddlers, dancing masters, painters, in a word



their different instructors in knowledge and accomplishments, and even sometimes preachers of religion and holy monks, as Boccaccio doth describe and the Queen of Navarre in her *Nouvelles*. The like is done by pages, as myself have noted, lackeys, and especially stage-players, with whom I have known two maids of honour desperately in love and not scrupling to indulge the same. Poets too I have known in some cases to have debauched fair maids, wives and widows.

These do fondly love to be praised and worshipped, and with this bait are caught, as indeed by almost any they do find convenient and can attract to them. Lawyers again be very dangerous folk in these matters.

Now note why 'tis Boccaccio and other writers with him do find maids to be more constant in love and more steadfast than wives or widows. 'Tis because they do resemble persons afloat on a river in a sinking boat. They that cannot swim at all do spring at the first branches they can catch hold of, and do grasp these firmly and obstinately till they see help arrive. Others that can swim, do leap into the water and strike out boldly till they have reached the bank. Even so young maids, whenas they have gotten a lover, do hold and keep him steadfastly, the one they have first chose, and will in no wise let him go, but love him steadfastly. This cometh of the dread that, having no free choice and proper opportunity, they may not be able, an if they lose him, to get another such as they would wish. Whereas married women and widows, which do know the wiles of love and are well experienced, and have full liberty and all convenience to swim in all waters without danger, may choose what mate they please; and if they weary of one

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lover or lose him, why! they can straight get another, or even take two. For with them 'tis ever a case of "one lost, two got back."

Beside, young girls have not the means, the money and crown-pieces, to win them new lovers every day; for all ever they can give their lovers is some small gift of a lock of hair, a little seed pearl or so, a bracelet, a small ring or a scarf, or other insignificant presents that cost almost naught. For high-born as a girl may be (I have seen it myself), and no matter of how great an house and how rich an heiress, she is kept so short of money, by father, mother, kinsfolk or guardians, as the case may be, that she simply hath not the means to give much to her lover, nor scarce ever to untie her purse widely,—unless it be her purse in front. Besides, girls be of themselves miserly, if for no other reason, yet because they be forced to it, having scarce any means of extravagance; for generosity in giving doth rest and depend above all on the ability to gratify it. On the contrary wives and widows can dispose of their wealth very freely, when they have any; and above all, when they have fancied a man, and be taken with passion and caprice for him, there is naught they will not sell and give away to the very shift on their back, rather than not have enjoyment of him. Herein they are just like gluttons and folk that be slaves of their mouths, who taking a fancy to a tid-bit, must have the same, no matter what it cost them at the market. Poor maids be in quite other case; whatsoever they can get, be it good or bad, this must they stop and buy.

I could bring forward a whole host of their intrigues, and their divers appetites and curious preferences. But I should never get me done at that rate; beside what

would such tales be worth, unless the subjects were given by name and surname. But this is a thing I will not do at any price, for I desire to bring shame on no woman; and I have made profession to avoid in this my book all evil-speaking whatsoever, so that none may have aught to reproach me with on the score of scandal-mongering. However to tell my tales, suppressing the names, in this can be no harm. I do leave my readers to guess the persons intended; and many a time they will suppose it to be one, though all the while 'tis quite another.

## 3.



NOW just as we do see different sorts of wood of such different nature, that some will burn when quite green, as the ash and the beech, but others, be they as dry, old and well seasoned as you please, for instance the elm, the alder and others, do burn only as slowly and tediously as possible, while many others, following the general nature of all dry and old wood, do blaze up in their dryness and oldness so rapidly and suddenly 'tis rather a destroying and instant reducing to ashes than burning proper, so is the like true of women, whether maids, wives or widows. Some, so soon as ever they be come to the first greenness of their age, do burn so easily and well, you would say from their very mother's womb they do draw thence an amorousness; as did the fair Laïs from her fair mother Tymandra, that most famous harlot, and an hundred thousand others which herein do take after the good whores their mothers. Nay! sometimes they do not so much as wait for the age of maturity, that may be put

at twelve or thirteen, to begin loving, but are at it sooner yet. This happened not twelve years ago at Paris to a pastry-cook's child, which was discovered to be pregnant at nine years of age.<sup>1</sup> The girl being very sick with her pregnancy, and her father having taken a specimen of her urine to a physician, the latter said at once she had no other sickness but only that she was with child. "What!" cried the father; "Why, Sir! my daughter is only nine years old." Who so astonished as the doctor? "'Tis all one," said he; "of a surety, she is with child." And after examining her more closely, he did indeed find her so. The child afterward confessing with whom she had had to do, her gallant was condemned to death by the judges, for having gone with her at so very tender an age. I much regret I have come to give this example and mention the thing here, seeing I had made up my mind not to sully my paper with suchlike mean folk, but to deal only with great and well-born persons.

Herein I have somewhat gone wide of my purpose, but the story being so rare and uncommon, I must e'en be excused.

This doth remind me of a tale of a brave and gallant Lord if ever there was one, since dead, which was one day making complaint of the amplitude of women's affairs with whom he had had to do, as well maids as married ladies. He declared 'twould come to his having to look for mere children, just come from the cradle so to speak, so as not to find so wide a space of open sea as he had done with the rest, but get better pleasure by swimming in a narrow strait. An if he had addressed these words to a certain great and honourable dame I do know, she would



have made him the same answer she did to another gentleman of the great world, to whom, on his making a like complaint, she did retort thus: "I wot not which hath better cause of complaint, you men of our width and over amplitude, or we women of your tenuity and over smallness, or rather your tiny, tiny littleness; truly we have as much to lament in you as ever you in us."

The lady was right enough in what she said. Similarly another great lady, one day at Court looking curiously at the great bronze Hercules in the fountain at Fontainebleau, as she was a-walking with an honourable gentleman which did escort her, his hand beneath her arm, did complain that the said Hercules, albeit excellently well wrought and figured otherwise, was not so well proportioned in all his members as should be, forasmuch as his middle parts were far too small and out of proper measure, in no wise corresponding to his huge colossus of a body. The gentleman replied he did not agree with what she said, for 'twas to be supposed that in those days ladies were not so wide as at the present.

A very great lady and noble Princess<sup>2</sup> learning how that certain folk had given her name to a huge great culverin, did ask the reason why. Whereupon one present answered: "'Tis for this, Madam, because it hath a calibre greater and wider than all the rest."

*Si est-ce pourtant qu'elles y ont trouvé assez de remède, et en trouvent tous les jours assez pour rendre leurs portes plus étroites, carrées et plus malaisées d'entrée; dont aucunes en usent, et d'autres non; mais nonobstant, quand le chemin y est bien battu et frayed souvent par continuelle habitation et fréquentation, ou passages d'enfants, les ouvertures de plusieurs en sont toujours plus grandes*

*et plus larges. Je me suis là un peu perdu et dévoyé; mais puisque ç'a été à propos il n'y a point de mal, et je retourne à mon chemin.*

Many other young girls there be which let safely pass this early, tender, sappy time of life, waiting a greater maturity and dryness, whether because they be naturally cold at first beginning and start, or that they be kept close guarded, as is very needful with some. Others there be so steadfast, the winds and tempests of winter would avail naught to shake or stir them. Others again be so foolish and simple-minded, so raw and ignorant, as that they would not so much as hear the name of love. So have I heard of a woman which did affect the virtuous prude, that an if she did hear the word harlot mentioned, she would instantly faint. A friend telling this story to a certain great Lord in presence of his wife, the latter did exclaim: "She'd better not come here, that woman; for if she doth faint to hear speak of whores, she'll die right out to see one."

On the other hand there be some girls which from the first moment they begin to feel they have a heart, grow so tame they will eat from the hand at once. Others be so devout and scrupulous, fearing so sore the commandments of the Lord our God, that they do quite neglect that of love. Yet have I seen many of these same devout paterers of prayers, these women that be forever a-kissing of images and all but living in churches, which did under this hypocritical veil cover and conceal the fire of their passions, to the end that by such false and feigned semblance the world might perceive never a trace of them, but deem them perfect prudes, or even half way to being saints like St. Catherine of Sienna, by the which profes-

sions they have often succeeded in deceiving all mankind. Thus have I heard it related of a very great Princess, a Queen indeed, now dead, who when she was fain to make love to any man, (for she was exceeding given that way), would invariably begin her conversation with the love we do owe to God, and then suddenly bring it round to carnal love, and what she did want of her interlocutor, whereof she did before long come to the practice or quintessential part. This is how these devotees, or bigots rather, do cajole us men; such of us that is as be not well versed in wiles of the sort and know not life.

I have heard a tale, though I wot not if it be true. Anyway of late years, on occasion of a general procession at a certain city, was seen a woman, well born or not, barefooted and in great contrition, playing the penitent with might and main,—and it was in Lent. Straight from there she hied her away to dine with her lover on a quarter of kid and a ham. The savour did penetrate to the street, and going up to her chamber, folk found her in the midst of this glorious feast. She was arrested and condemned to be led through the town with the joint on a spit over her shoulder and the ham hanging at her neck. Was not this a meet and proper punishment?

Other ladies there be so proud and haughty they do scorn heaven and earth in a way of speaking, and utterly snub and reject men and all their offers. But for such all that is need is to wait and have patience and perseverance, for with these and time you do surely subdue them and find them humble enough at last, for 'tis the property of highmindedness and pride, after much swelling and exaltation, presently to come down and bate its lofty claims. And with these same proud dames, I have seen

many instances where after scorning love and all that spake to them thereof, they have given in and loved like any others, or have even wedded husbands of mean estate and in no way their equals. Thus doth Love make mock of them and punish them for their hard-heartedness, taking especial delight in attacking them more than other folk, forasmuch as the victory is then a prouder one, as vanquishing pride.

I knew erstwhile a Court damsel, so proud and scornful that when some gallant man of the world would come to address her and speak of love, she would ever answer him so haughtily and with so great contempt, in words so fierce and arrogant (for she had a gift of speech as good as any), that presently they did cease altogether. But an if any did chance now and again still to try and vanquish her pride, 'twas a sight how she would snub them and send them packing with words and looks and scornful gestures; for she was very clever at this game. In the end Love did surprise and sore punish her, for she gave in to one which did get her with child some score of days only before her marriage; yet was this lover in no wise to be compared with many other honourable gentlemen which had aforetime been fain to be her suitors. Herein we can only say with Horace, *sic placet Veneri*, "such is Venus' pleasure,"—for these be miracles.

'Twas my humour once while at Court to be lover to a fair and honorable damsel, accomplished and expert if ever woman was, and of a very good house, but proud and highhanded; and I was very much smit with her indeed. I did make up my mind to court her, but alway to deal with her in the same arrogant spirit she did use in her words and answers to me,—as the proverb saith,



“When Greek meets Greek.” Yet did she show no resentment for all this, for indeed, all the while I was treating her so cavalierly, I was used to praise her exceedingly, seeing there is naught doth more soften a woman’s heart than commendation whether of her beauty and charms or of her proud spirit, even declaring how that her port did much become her, forasmuch as she kept her from all common familiarity, and that any woman, damsel or dame, which did make her too common and familiar, not maintaining a haughty port and high repute, was not worthy to be so courted. For all which I did but respect her the more, and would never call her by any other name but *my lady Disdain*. Whereat she was so well pleased she did herself likewise choose to call me always *Master Arrogance*.

So ever continuing, I did court her long and faithfully; and I may boast me I had as large a share of her good graces as any great Lord at Court which did care to court her, or larger. However a chief favourite of the King, a brave and gallant gentleman without a doubt, did take her from me, and by favour of his King did win and marry her. Natheless, so long as she did live, the connection was ever kept up betwixt us, and I have always honoured her well. I know not an if I shall be blamed for having told this tale, for ’tis a common saying that all tales about a man’s self be bad. Anyway I have let it out this time; as indeed throughout my book I have related not a few stories of myself in divers relations, though I do generally suppress the name.

Other girls there be again of so merry a complexion and so lighthearted, so devoted to amusement and enjoyment, they never have another thought in their heads

but to laugh, and make sport and pastime, and never time to hear or dream of anything else but only their little amusements. I have known many such which had rather hear a fiddle play, or dance or leap or run, than hearken to any love discourse whatsoever; while other some do so adore the chase they should better be called servants of Diana than of Venus. I did once know a brave and valiant Lord, since dead, which fell so deep in love with a maid, and a great lady to boot, that he was like to die; "for whenas I am fain," he used to say, "to declare my passion, she doth answer me never a word but about her dogs and her hunting. I would to heaven I were metamorphosed into a hunting-dog or greyhound, and my soul entered in their body, according to Pythagoras' opinion, to the end she might give some heed to my love, and I be healed of my wound." Yet afterward did he leave her, for he was not good lackey or huntsman enough to go everywhere a-following her about, wherever her lusty humours, her pleasures and amusements might lead her.

Yet must we note one fact. Maids of this sort, after leaving their chickenhood behind and outgrowing the pip, (as we say of poultry), having taken their fill of these childish amusements, do always come, at long last, to essay a woman's pleasures too. Such young girls do resemble little wolf-cubs, which be so pretty, engaging and playful in their downy youth; yet being come to maturity, they do ever take to evil courses and ravening and killing. The sort of girls I am speaking of do ever the like, who after much sport and youthful merriment, after pleasures of all kinds, hunting, dancing, leaping, skipping and jiggling, do always, I ween, indulge at last in dame Venus' gentle sport. In a word, to put it briefly,

scarce ever a one of the sex is seen, maid, wife or widow, but sooner or later she and all her sisters do burn, in season or out of season,—as do all woods, excepting only one, yclept the *larix*, the which they do in no wise resemble.

Now this *Larix* is a wood which will never burn, and maketh neither fire, flame nor ash, as Julius Cæsar did find. On his return back from Gaul, he had ordered the inhabitants of Piedmont to furnish him vivers, and establish magazines on his main line of march. He was duly obeyed, except by the garrison of a castle called *Larignum*, whither had withdrawn certain ill-disposed rascals, recusants and rebels, the result being Cæsar had to turn back and besiege the place. Coming nigh the fortress, he saw its defences were only of wood, whereat he did straightway make mock, deeming they would immediately take the same. Wherefore he did give orders at once to collect large plenty of fagots and straw to set fire to the bulwarks, and soon was there so huge a conflagration and mass of flame that all hoped soon to see the ruin and destruction of the fort. But lo! whenas the fire was burned out and the flame disappeared, all were exceeding astonished, for they beheld the stronghold in the same state as before and quite unhurt, neither burned nor ruined one whit. This did compel Cæsar to resort to other means, mining to wit, which did at last bring those within to come to terms and render up the place. From this Cæsar did learn the virtues of this *larix*-wood, from the which the castle had its name of *Larignum*, because it was built and defended of the same.

I ween there be many fathers, mothers, kinsmen and husbands, that would dearly like their daughters and

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wives should share the properties of this wood, that they should burn fiercely without its leaving mark or effect behind. They would have a far more unruffled mind and not so many suspicions a-buzzing in their heads, nor would there be so many whores on show nor cuckolds before the world. But 'tis not really desirable in any shape or form, for the world would be clean depopulated, and folk would live therein like blocks of stone, without pleasure or satisfaction. So many persons I wot of, of either sex, would say; and indeed Nature would be left imperfect, instead of very perfect as she is. Following her kindly lead as our best captain, we need never fear to lose the right path.





### ARTICLE III

#### OF THE LOVE OF WIDOWS

##### 1.



WELL! enough said of maids; 'tis but right we now proceed to speak of widows in their turn.

The love of widows is good, easy and advantageous, seeing they be in full liberty of action, and in no sense slaves of fathers, mothers, brothers, kinsmen and husbands, nor yet of any legal bar, a still more important point. A man may make love and lie with a widow as much as ever he please, he is liable to no penalty, as he is with maids or married women. In fact the Romans, which people hath given us the most of the laws we have, did never make this act punishable, either in person or property. I have this from a great lawyer, who did cite Papinian for confirmation of the point, that great Roman jurisconsult, who treating of adultery declares: if occasionally under this term adultery hath been inadvertently included lawless intercourse with maid or widow, 'tis a misuse of words. In another passage the same authority saith: the heir hath no right of reproach or concern with the character of the deceased man's widow, except only if the deceased had in his lifetime brought action against his wife on this ground; then could the said heir take up and carry on the prosecution,

but not otherwise. And as a fact in all the whole of Roman law is no penalty ordained for the widow, except only for one that did marry again within the year of her mourning, or who without re-marrying had borne a child subsequently to the eleventh month of her first year of widowhood, this first year being deemed sacred to the honour of her former husband. There was likewise a law made by Heliogabalus, that no widow must marry again for one year after the death of her husband, to the end she might have due leisure to bewail his loss and deliberate carefully on the choice of a successor. A truly paternal law, and an excellent reason i' faith! As for a widow's original dowry, the heir could not in any case rob her thereof, even though she should have given her person to every possible form of naughtiness. And for this my authority did allege a very good reason; for the heir having no other thought but only the property, if once a door were opened to him to accuse the widow in hope of making her forfeit this and so rob her of her dowry, she would be exposed at once to every calumny his malignity could invent. So there would be never a widow, no matter how virtuous and unoffending, could safeguard her from slanderous actions on the part of enterprising heirs.

All this would seem to show, I think, that the Roman ladies did have good opportunities and occasion for self-indulgence. No need then to be astonished if one of them, in the reign of Marcus Aurelius, (as is found writ in that Emperor's life), as she was walking in her husband's funeral procession, and in the midst of all her cries, sobs, sighs, tears and lamentations, did so strictly press the hand of the gentleman which was her escort, as to surely signify thereby her willnigness for another taste of love

and marriage. Accordingly at the end of a year,—for he could not marry her before, without a special dispensation, as was done for Pompey whenas he did wed Cæsar's daughter, but this was scarce ever given but to the greatest personages,—he did marry the lady, having meantime enjoyed some dainty foretastes, and picked many an early loaf out of the batch, as the saying goes. Mighty fain was this good lady to lose naught by procrastination, but take her measures in good time; yet for all this, she did lose never a doit of her property and original dowry.

Thus fortunate were Roman widows,—as are still in the main their French sisters, which for giving heart and fair body satisfaction, do lose naught of their rights; albeit several cases hereanent have been pleaded before our parliaments. Thus I wot of a great and wealthy French Lord, which did carry on a long process against his sister-in-law concerning her dowry, charging her that her life had been lascivious and with another crime of a less gay sort to boot. Natheless did she win her case; and the brother-in-law was obliged to dower her handsomely and give her all that did belong to her. Yet was the governance of her son and daughter taken from her, seeing she had married again. This the judges and noble councillors of the parliaments do look to, forbidding widows that re-marry to have guardianship of their children. In spite of this I do know of widows which within the last few years have successfully asserted their rights, though re-married, over their daughters being under age, against their brothers-in-law and other kinsmen; but then they were greatly helped by the influence of the Prince which was their protector. Indeed there is never a law a fine *motte* cannot traverse. Of these subjects I do now

refrain me from speaking more, seeing 'tis not my trade; so thinking to say something mighty clever, 'tis very like I may say what is quite from the point. I do refer me to our great men of the law.

Now of our widows some be alway glad to try marriage once again and run its risks, like mariners that twice, thrice and four times saved from shipwreck do again and again go back to the sea, and as married women do, which in the pains of motherhood do swear and protest they will never, never go back to it again, and no man shall ever be aught to them, yet no sooner be they sound and clean again, but they take to the same old dance once more. So a Spanish lady, being in her pangs, had a candle lighted in honour of Our Lady of Mont-Sarrat, who much succours women in child-birth. Yet did she fail not to have sore pain and swear right earnestly she would never go back to it any more. She was no sooner delivered but turning to her woman who held the candle still alight, she said, *Serra esto cabillo de candela para otra vez*, "Put away that bit of candle for another time."

Other ladies do prefer not to marry; and of these are always some, and always have been, which coming to be widows in the flower of their age, be content to stay so. Ourselves have seen the Queen Mother, which did become a widow at the age of seven or eight and thirty years, and did ever after keep that state; and fair, pleasant and agreeable as she was, did never so much as think of any man to be her second husband. No doubt it may be said on the other side,—Whom could she have wedded suitable to her lofty estate and comparable with the great King Henri, her late lord and master; beside she would thereby have lost the government of the Kingdom, which was



better worth than an hundred husbands, and its enjoyment more desirable and pleasant? Yet is there no advantage Love doth not make women forget; wherefore she is the more to be commended and worthy to be recorded in the temple of fame and immortality. For she did master and command her passions,—not like another Queen, which unable to restrain herself, did wed her own steward of the household, by name the *Sieur de Rabodanges*. This the King, her son, did at first beginning find exceeding strange and bitter; but yet, because she was his mother, he did excuse and pardon the said *Rabodanges* for having married her; and it was arranged that by day, before the world, he should serve her alway as steward, not to deprive her, being the King's mother, of her proper state and dignity, but by night she should make of him what pleased her, using him either as servant or master at her choice, this being left to their own discretion and good pleasure. We may readily imagine who was master then; for every woman, be she as high-born as she may, coming to this point, is ever subject to the superior male, according to the law of nature and humanity in this matter. I have the tale from the late *Grand Cardinal de Lorraine*, second of the name and title, which did tell it at *Poissy* to King *Francis II.*, the time he did institute the eighteen knights of the Order of *Saint Michael*,—a very great number, and one never seen or heard of before then. Among others was the *Seigneur de Rabodanges*, a very old man, that had not been seen for years at Court, except on occasion of some of our warlike expeditions, he having withdrawn soon after the death of *M. de Lautrec* out of disappointment and despite, a common enough case, having lost his good master, the Captain of whose Guard he

was, on his journey to the Kingdom of Naples, where he died. And the Cardinal did further say he did believe this M. de Rabodanges was descended of the marriage in question.—Some while agoe a lady of France did marry her page, so soon as ever his pagehood was expired and he his own master, thinking she had worn her widow's weeds quite long enough.

Well, to leave this sort of widows, and say somewhat of more high-minded and prudent dames.

We have had our Queen of France, Donna Isabelle of Austria, which was wife to the late King Charles IX., whom we may in all ways declare to have been one of the best, gentlest, wisest and most virtuous Queens that ever reigned of all the Kings and Queens that ever were. This I may confidently affirm, and every one that hath ever seen her or heard her speak will say the same, and this without disparaging others and with the most perfect truth. She was a very beautiful Princess, with features and face as fair and delicate as any lady at the Court, and most affable. Her figure too was very fine, albeit she did scarce reach the middle height. She was very sensible and prudent moreover, most virtuous and good-natured, and one that did never hurt or displeasure any, or give offence by so much as the smallest word. And indeed she was very careful of her speech, saying but very little and alway in her native Spanish.

She was truly pious, but no wise bigoted, not overmuch manifesting her religion by outward acts and shows, and an extremitie of devotion, such as I have seen some of our prayer-patterers display, but rather without missing any of the regular hour for supplication to God, she did employ these well and sufficiently, without going out of

her way to borrow other extraordinary ones. 'Tis very true, as I have heard some of her ladies declare, that whenas she was to bed apart and hid, and her curtains close drawn, she would kneel there devoutly in her shift and make prayer to God by the space of an hour and a half, beating and tormenting her breast in her zeal of devotion.

This habit had never been noted at all till after the death of King Charles her husband. But one night after she had gone to bed and all her women were retired, one of those which did sleep in her chamber, hearing her sighing, did bethink her to peep between the curtains, and saw her in the posture described, so praying and beseeching God, which practice she did continue well nigh every evening. At length the said bedchamber-woman, who was on very familiar terms with her, did venture to remonstrate one day with her on the ground she was hurting her health. The Queen was angered against the woman for her discovery and advice, and fain almost to deny the thing, and did straitly charge her to breathe never a word about it. Wherefore for that evening she did desist; but in the night she did fully make up for it, supposing her women would not observe it. But they saw her, and found how it was, by the reflexion of her chamber-light of wax, the which she did keep burning by her bedside next the wall, for to read in her Book of Hours and pray God at whiles, using for this pious purpose the same space where other Queens and Princesses do keep their table of refection. Suchlike prayers do little resemble those of hypocrites, which wishing to appear religious before the world, do make their orisons and devotions publicly, and

aye with mumbling of the lips, to the end folk may deem them exceeding devout and sanctified.

Thus would our good Queen pray for the soul of the King, her husband, whom she did sorely grieve for, yet all the while making her moan and lamentation not like a wild and desperate woman, screaming, and tearing her cheeks and hair, nor yet merely counterfeiting one that is commended for her tears, but sorrowing gently, dropping her fair and precious tears so tenderly, sighing so soft and low, as that 'twas plain to see she was restraining her grief all she could, to the end people might not think her desirous of making a fine seeming and grand impression (a thing I have seen many ladies do in such case), yet failing not at all to convince all of the deep anguish of her heart. Even so a torrent is ever more violent whose course is stayed than when it hath free space to run in. I do well remember me how, all through the King's malady, her dear lord and husband, he lying in his bed and she coming to visit him, she would quick sit her down by his side, not close to his bed's-head, as is usual, but a little withdrawn, yet within his sight, where remaining without speaking scarce at all to him, or he to her, she would keep her eyes all the while so fixed upon him, that never taking them from off his face she did verily seem to be warming him in her heart with the heat of all the love she bare him. Presently she might be seen dropping tears so soft and secret, that any which had not chanced to note them, would have never known her grief. There would she sit, drying her wet eyes under pretence of using her handkerchief, that 'twas downright pity to every soul there (I saw the thing myself) to see her so troubled to hide her grief and love, and prevent the King from seeing the signs of her sorrow. Such was ever



her practise in her husband's sickness; whereafter she would rise and hie her to her prayers for his restoration to health. She did truly love and honour him exceedingly, albeit she knew him of amorous complexion and that he had mistresses, whether for his renown or for his pleasure. But yet was she never a whit less kind, nor ever said an ill word to him, patiently bearing her little load of jealousy and the wrong he did her. She was a very meet and proper mate for him; for 'twas indeed fire and water come together in one, the King being naturally quick, hot and stirring, she cool and temperate in all things.

I have been told on good authority, how that after her widowhood, among certain of her more privy ladies, which were for giving her such consolation as they could suggest, was one (for, as you may suppose, among so great a band there will alway be one more maladroit than the rest), which, thinking to please highly, did address her thus: "At least, Madam, an if instead of a daughter he had but left you a son, you would at this moment be the King's Queen Mother, and your dignity by so much increased and strengthened."—But her answer was: "Alas! alas! say not such a thing. As if France had not misfortunes enough already, without my having caused yet another to be her utter ruin. For had I had a son, this would only have mean more factions, troubles and seditions for to get the care and guardianship of the young King during his infancy and minority. Hence would have sprung more war and strife than ever, each striving to make his profit and draw advantage by plundering the poor child, as they were fain to do to the late King, my husband, and would have done but for the Queen, his mother, and his good

servants which did oppose such doings. But an if I had had a son, I should have but found unhappiness in the thought of having borne him, and gotten a thousand maledictions of the people, whose voice is the voice of God. Wherefore I tell you I do praise my God, and am right thankful for the fruit he hath vouchsafed me, be it for better or for worse to me in the end." Such was the kindness of this good-hearted Princess toward the country of her adoption.

I have likewise heard tell how at the massacre of the Saint Bartholomew, the Queen, knowing naught of it and having never the least suspicion in the world of what was plotting, did get her to bed in her usual fashion. On her waking in the morning, she was first thing informed of the fine mystery that was a-playing. "Woe is me!" she did cry out instantly, "the King, my husband, doth he know of it?"—"Of a surety, Madam," came the answer; "'tis he that doth order it."—"Great God," she cried in horror, "what thing is this? and what counsellors be they which have given him this advice? Oh, God! I do beseech and pray thee to pardon this sin, for an if Thou be not pitiful, this offence, I fear me sore, is beyond all pardon." Then she did quick ask for her Book of Hours, and so to prayers and supplication to the Almighty, the tears dropping from her eyes.

Prithee consider the wisdom and goodness the said Queen did manifest in not approving of such a merrymaking and the cruel game that was played thereat, and this although she had much cause to desire the utter extermination of the Admiral (Coligny) and his fellow religionists, seeing they were absolutely opposed in every way to her own faith, the which she did adore and honour more than aught else in all

the world, and on the other hand because she could plainly see how they did trouble the Kingdom of her gracious lord and husband. Moreover the Emperor her father had actually said to her, as she was setting forth with him on her way to France: "My daughter," he said, "you are going as Queen to a Kingdom the fairest, strongest and most puissant in the world, and so far I do hold you a very happy woman. Yet would you be happier still, an if you could but find it at peace within its borders and as flourishing as erstwhile it was used to be. But you will actually find it sorely torn, dismembered, divided and weakened, for albeit the King, your future husband, is on the right side, yet the Princes and Lords of the Protestant faith do much hurt and injury on the other." And indeed she did find it even as he said.

Being now a widow, many of the most clear-sighted folk I wot of at Court, both men and women, did deem the new King, on his arrival back from Poland, would marry her, in spite of the fact she was his sister-in-law. But then he could well do so by virtue of the Pope's dispensation, who can do much in this respect, and especially where great personages be concerned, in view of the public advantage involved. And there were many reasons for concluding the said marriage, the which I have left to more authoritative writers than myself to deduce, without my alleging them here. But amongst others one of the chiefest was to recognise by the marriage the great obligations the King lay under to the Emperor on the occasion of his quitting Poland for to return to France. For there can be no reasonable doubt, an if the Emperor had chose to put the smallest obstacle in his path, he would never have been able to get away and cross the

frontier and make his way to France. The Poles were anxious to keep him, only he did leave them without ever a farewell; while the Germans were on the watch on every side to capture him (as was done to the gallant King Richard of England, on his return from the Holy Land, as we read in our Chronicles), and would have certainly held him prisoner and made him pay ransom, or maybe worse. For they were exceeding sore with him, for the sake of the Feast of Saint Bartholomew,—or at any rate the Protestant Princes were. However, he did voluntarily and without ceremony throw himself suddenly on the protection of the Emperor, which did receive him very graciously and lovingly, and with great honour and much gracious familiarity, as if the twain had been brothers. Then presently, after he had tarried with him some days, he did in person convoy him a day or two's journey on his way, and give him a perfectly safe passage through his dominions, so by his favour he did eventually win to Carinthia, the Venetian territories, Venice itself, and presently his own kingdom.

Such was the obligation the King of France lay under to the Emperor, one which many persons, as I have said, did suppose the former would have paid back by binding yet firmer his alliance with him. But at the time he went into Poland, he had seen at Blamont in Lorraine, the fair Louise de Lorraine, Mademoiselle de Vaudémont, one of the most beautiful, virtuous and accomplished Princess in all Christendom. On her he did cast such ardent eyes as that being presently inflamed with deepest love, and keeping his passion warm all the while he was away, he did straightway on his return to Lyons despatch M. du Gua, one of his chiefest favourites (as truly he did in every way



deserve to be), to Lorraine. Arrived there, he did settle and conclude the match betwixt him and her very easily and with no great disputing, as you may well imagine, such good fortune being beyond the utmost hopes of him and his daughter,—the one to be father-in-law of the King of France, the other to be Queen of that Realm. Of this Princess I do propose to speak elsewhere.

## 2.

**T**O return once more to our little Queen. Wearied of a longer tarrying in France for sundry reasons, and in especial because she was not properly respected and appreciated there as she did deserve to be, she did resolve to go finish out the remainder of her virtuous days with the Emperor, her father, and the Empress, her mother. During her residence at their Court, the Catholic King was widowed of his Queen, Anne of Austria, own sister of the said French Queen Elisabeth. The latter he would fain have married and did send to beg the Empress, who was sister of the said Catholic King, to open the first proposals to that effect. But she would never hearken, once, twice or three times that her mother spake to her of the matter, appealing to the ashes of the late King, her husband, the which she declared she would never insult by a second marriage, and likewise alleging the over close consanguinity and near relationship which was betwixt the two, whereby the marriage might well anger God sorely. Whereupon the Empress and the King her brother did bethink them to have a Jesuit Father, a very learned and very eloquent man, speak with her, who did exhort and sermonize her

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## LIVES OF FAIR AND GALLANT LADIES

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all ever he could, not forgetting to quote all the most telling passages of Holy Scripture of every sort that might advance his object. But the Queen did straight confound him with other as good and more appropriate quotations, for since her widowhood she had applied her earnestly to the study of God's Word, alleging moreover her fixed determination, which was her chiefest bulwark, never to forget her husband in a second marriage. The end was the Jesuit came back with naught accomplished. However, being strongly urged there by letters from the King of Spain, he did return once again to the attack, not content with the firm answer he had already had of the said Princess. The latter, unwilling to waste more time in vain contest with him, did treat him to some strong words and actual menaces, cutting him short with the warning that if he would persist in deafening her any more with the matter, she would make him repent his interference, even threatening she would have him whipped in her kitchen. I have further heard tell,—I know not with how much truth,—that, the man having attacked her for the third time, she went beyond threats, and had him chastised for his insolence. But this I do not believe, seeing she did too well love folk of holy life, such as these men be.

Such was the constancy and noble firmness of this virtuous Queen,—a constancy she did keep unbroken to the end of her days, ever honouring the sacred ashes of her husband. Faithfully did she water these with her mournful tears, whose fountain at the last drying up, she did succumb to her sorrow and die very young. She could not have been more than five and thirty at her decease,—truly a quite inestimable loss, for she might long have

been a mirror of virtue to all honourable ladies throughout Christendom.

And verily, showing as she did the love she bare the King, her husband, by her constancy, virtuous continence and unceasing plaints, she did manifest the same even more finely toward the Queen of Navarre, her sister-in-law. For knowing her to be in great extremity of distress, and reduced to live in a remote Castle of Auvergne, all but deserted of all her friends and followers and by the most part of those she had erstwhile obliged, she did send to greet her and offer her every assistance. In fact she did presently give her one-half of all her jointure which she did enjoy in France, sharing with her as if she had been her own proper sister. They say indeed this high-born Queen would have had no little hardship to endure but for this great liberality of her good and gentle kinswoman. Accordingly she did pay her great respect, loving and honouring her so well she had all the difficulty in the world to bear her death with proper patience. Indeed, for twenty days running she did keep her bed, weeping and crying and making continual moan; and ever after did naught but regret and deplore her loss, devoting to her memory the noblest words, such that there could be no need to borrow better to praise her withal and keep her remembrance immortally green. I have been told further that Queen Elisabeth too did compose and endite a work of such beauty it cometh near God's own word, as also one containing the history of all that did hap in France while she was in that country. I know not if this be true, but I have been assured the book was seen in the hands of the Queen of Navarre, as though it had been sent her as a last present before the other's death.

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## LIVES OF FAIR AND GALLANT LADIES

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'Twas most highly thought on of her, and pronounced a most admirable production. At the word of so noble and divine an oracle, what can we do but believe 'twas verily so?

Such then is the summary account I have been able to give of our good Queen Elisabeth, of her kindness, virtue, constancy and faithfulness, and her true and loyal love toward the King, her husband. And 'twas but her nature to be so good and virtuous (I have heard M. de Lansac, who was in Spain when she died, tell how the Empress said to him on that occasion, *El mejor de nosotros es muerto*,—"The best of us all is dead"), and we may well believe how in such actions this Queen was but for imitating her own mother, her great aunts and aunts. For the Empress, her mother, albeit she was left a widow when still quite young and very handsome, would never marry again, but did ever after continue in her widowhood, right wisely and steadfastly, having quitted Austria and Germany, the scene of her rule, after the death of the Emperor, her husband. She went to join her brother in Spain, having been summoned of him and besought to go thither to help him in the heavy burden of his affairs. This she did, for indeed she was a very prudent and well-counselled Princess. I have heard the late King Henri III., who was more skilled in reading character than any other man in all his Kingdom, declare she was in his opinion one of the most honourable, wise and accomplished Princesses in the world.

On this, her journey to Spain, after passing through the divers States of Germany, she did presently arrive at Genoa in Italy, where she embarked. But seeing 'twas in winter, in the month of December, that she took ship, a



storm did overtake her at Marseilles, at which port she was forced to cast anchor in the roads. Yet would she never come within the harbour, she or her galleys, for fear of giving any ground for umbrage or suspicion; nor did herself enter the town but only once, to see the sights. Off this port she did tarry seven or eight days, a-waiting for fair weather. Her most favourite course was every morning to leave her galley (for she did usually sleep a-board), and so during the day to go hear the service of mass at the Church of St. Victor with very devout attention. Then presently, her dinner having been brought and made ready in the Abbey, she would there dine; after which she would indulge in discourse with her ladies, or her folk generally, or else with divers gentlemen of Marseilles, which did show her all the honour and respect due to so noble a Princess, the King of France indeed having bid them specially to receive her as it were his own kingly person in recompense for the good welcome and excellent cheer she had given him at Vienna. This she did readily enough perceive; and for that reason would converse very intimately with them and show herself exceeding condescending, treating them more after the German and French fashion than the Spanish. In fact they were no less delighted with her than she with them, and did write a most courteous letter to the King, thanking him and informing him they were as worthy and honourable folk as ever she had seen in any place. Moreover she did make separate mention by name of some score or so of them, among whom was M. Castellan, known as the Seigneur Altyvity, Captain of the King's Galleys, a man much renowned for having wedded the fair Chasteau-neuf, a Court lady, and for having killed the Grand Prior,

himself falling along with him, as I do hope to relate in another place. It was none other than his wife which did relate to me what I here set down, and did tell me of all the perfections of this noble Princess, and how pleasant she did find her enforced stay at Marseilles, and how she admired and enjoyed the place in her walks abroad. But evening once come, she did never fail to return to sleep on board her galley, to the end, the moment fine weather and a favourable wind should come, she might straight make sail, or mayhap because she was anxious to give no cause of umbrage. I was at Court at the time these facts were reported to the King concerning her passing visit, who was most anxious to know if she had been well received, and how she was, and did wish her well in all respects. The said Princess is yet alive, and doth continue in her good and virtuous behaviour, having done her brother excellent service, by all I am told. She did later retire for her final abode and dwelling-place to a Convent of religious women, called the *descalçadas* (unshod), because they do wear neither shoes nor stockings. This house was founded by her sister, the Princess of Spain.

This same Princess of Spain was a very beautiful lady in her day, and of a most courtly dignity. Else truly she would not have been a Spanish Princess; for of a surety, fine bearing and becoming grace do ever go along with Royalty, and above all with Spanish Royalty. Myself have had the honour of seeing her and speaking with her on terms of some intimacy, whenas I was in Spain after my return from Portugal. The first time I went to pay my duty to our Queen Elisabeth of France, and was discoursing with her, answering her many questions as to the news from France and Portugal, they came to inform

the Queen that the Princess of Spain was coming in. Instantly she said to me: "Nay! do not retire, Monsieur de Bourdeille; you will see a very fair and noble Princess, and will find pleasure in so doing. She will be very glad to see you and to ask you news of the King, her son, as you have just lately seen him." Hereupon cometh the Princess herself, whom I thought exceeding handsome, and in my opinion very becomingly attired, on her head a Spanish cap of white crêpe, coming low down in a point over the face, but not otherwise in widow's weeds, according to the Spanish fashion, for indeed her almost constant wear was silk. At first I did gaze long at her and admire her beauty, till just as I was growing quite enthralled, the Queen did call me up, and told me the Princess was fain to hear news of me concerning the King her son; for I had already overheard the Queen informing her how she had but now been conversing with a gentleman of the King's, late come from Portugal. At this, I came forward, and did kiss her gown in the Spanish mode, whereupon she did greet me very graciously and familiarly, and began asking me news of the King, her son, his behaviour, and what I thought of him. For at the time a proposed match was being talked of betwixt him and the noble Princess Marguerite of France, the King's sister and now Queen of Navarre. I did give her abundance of information; for in those days I did speak Spanish as well as my native French, or even better. Among other questions, she did ask me, "Was her son handsome, and who was he most like?" I told her he was one of the handsomest Princes in Christendom, as truly he was, and that he was like her in every way, and the living image of her

beauty, whereat she gave a little smile and blush, plainly showing her pleasure at what I had said.

After we had conversed a long while together, the Queen's attendants came to summon her to supper, and so the two sisters separated. Then did the Queen say to me (she had been amusing herself at the window, yet had heard most of what we said), with a laugh: "You did please her mightily by what you said as to the likeness betwixt her son and her." Presently she asked what I thought of her, and if I did not think her a noble lady, and such as she had described her, and anon remarked: "I imagine she would be right glad to wed the King, my brother, and I should dearly love it." All this I did duly report later to the Queen Mother, when I was returned back to the French Court, which was at the time at Arles in Provence. But she did declare the Princess was too old for him, old enough to be his mother. I informed her moreover of what I had been told in Spain, and did consider of good authority, to wit that she was firm resolved never to marry again, an it were not to wed the King of France, or failing this to withdraw from the world altogether.

And truly she did grow so enamoured of this high match and fair prospect, for she was of high heart and ambition, and she did firmly believe she was approaching its accomplishment, or failing this, was resolved to end her days in the convent I have spoken of, where already she was having buildings constructed against her possible retirement from the world. Accordingly she did long cling to this hope and belief, ever wisely maintaining her widowhood, till she did learn of the King's marriage with her niece. Then, all her hopes frustrated, she did pronounce these words expressive



of despite or something like it, as I have been told: *Aunque la nieta sea por su verano mas moza, y menos cargada de años que la tia, la hermosura de la tia, ya en su estio toda hecha y formada por sus gentiles y fructiferos años, vale mas que todos los frutos que su edad florescida da esperanza à venir; porque la menor desdicha humana los harà caer y perder ni mas ni menos que alguinos arboles, los quales, en el verano, por sus lindas y blancos flores nos prometen linda fruta en el estio, y el menor viento que acade los lleva y abate, no quedando que las hojas. Ea! dunque pasase todo con la voluntad de Dios, con el qual desde agora me voy, no con otro, para siempre jamas, me casar,—*“True the niece is younger and in her first prime, and less advanced in years than the aunt, yet is the beauty of the latter, already in its summer glory, fully grown and formed by the gracious years, and bearing fruit, better worth than all the fruits that the other’s age, now but beginning to bloom, doth give expectation of. For the smallest human accident will destroy the same, withering and ruining them, just like trees in the spring-time, which by their fair white blossoms do promise us fair and excellent fruits in summer. But let only a little blast of wind arise, and lo! they be broken off and beaten down and spoiled, and naught left but only leaves. Well! God’s will be done, with whom I am about to wed for all eternity, and with no human bridegroom at all.” So said, so done; and thereafter she did lead a life so good and holy, altogether removed from the wicked world, as that she hath left behind to all ladies, great and small, a noble example for their imitation.

Some folks might possibly say, “Well! God be thanked she could not marry King Charles; for be sure, and if this

could have been brought about, she would have sent far enough the hard life of a widow, and been right glad to take up again the soft and pleasant one of a wife." This may well be allowed; but this likewise it must be granted on the other hand, that the great wish she did display to wed this puissant Monarch was but a manifestation of her proud and ambitious Spanish heart, for to show her high spirit, and prove she would in no wise take a lowly place; but seeing her sister an Empress, not able to be one too, yet fain to rival her, she did therefore aspire to be Queen of the realm of France, which is as good as any Empire, or better, and, if not in actual fact, yet in will and desire to be on an equal footing with her. Such motives do well accord with her character, as I have heard it described. To make an end, she was in mine opinion one of the most noble and high-bred foreign Princesses I have ever seen, albeit she may perhaps be reproached with her retirement from the world, due rather to despise than to genuine devotion. Yet she did thus piously withdraw her; and her good life and holy have sufficiently made manifest the true sanctity of her character.

## 3.



HER aunt, Queen Mary of Hungary, did the like, but at a very advanced age, and this no less from her own desire to retire from the world than in order to help her brother the Emperor to serve God well and piously. This same Queen was widowed at a very early age, having lost King Louis, her husband, which fell very young in a battle he fought with the Turks,—a battle he should never of rights have lost,

but for the obstinacy of a Cardinal, which had much influence over him and did over-persuade him against his better judgement, declaring 'twas not meet to distrust God's power and a righteous cause. Though he should have but ten thousand Hungarians, more or less, on his side, yet these being all good Christians and fighting in God's quarrel, he should easily rout ten thousand Turks. In fine he did so incite and push him to recklessness, as that he did lose the battle; and presently attempting to retreat was entangled in a marsh and there choked.

The same fate befell the last King of Portugal, Don Sebastian, which did perish miserably, having risked battle with too weak a force against the Moors, that were three times as strong as himself. This was done through the advice, preaching and obstinacy of sundry Jesuits, which were forever alleging the power of Almighty God, who with a look could strike a whole host dead, above all when this was banded together against him. An excellent and a true doctrine doubtless; yet must we not be over confident and abuse God's promises, for His secret purpose will alway be past our finding out. Some say the Jesuit Fathers gave the counsel they did in all good faith, as is quite credible; others that they were traitors and had been gained over by the King of Spain, to the end they might so bring about the undoing of the young and gallant King of Portugal, courageous and fiery as he was, and himself be the better able to lay his hands on that he did after seize. Be this as it may, 'tis certain both these disasters befell through these folk, which be fain to manage armies, yet have never learned the trade of war.

And this is why the great Duc de Guise, after he had been sore deceived in his Italian expedition, was often used

to say, "I do love God's Church, yet will I never undertake a conquest on the word and faith of any Priest." By this he was for chiding the Pope, Caraffa, known as Paul IV., which had not kept his promises made to him in the most impressive and solemn words, or mayhap the Cardinal, his brother, who had gone all the way to Rome to discuss the matter and see how the land lay, after which he did recklessly urge his brother to the enterprise. It may well be the aforesaid Duc de Guise had in his mind both Pope and Cardinal; for undoubtedly, as I have been informed, whenever the Duke did repeat this saying, as oft he did, before his brother, the latter deeming it a stone pitched into his garden, would be secretly much enraged and furiously angry. This is a digression, but my subject seemed to warrant it.

To return now to our good Queen Mary of Hungary. After this disaster to her husband, she was left a very young and beautiful widow, as I have heard many persons say which have seen her, as also according to the portraits of her I have seen, which do all represent her as very fair, giving her never an ugly or censurable feature, except only her heavy, projecting mouth, or "Austrian lip." However this doth not really come from the House of Austria, but from that of Burgundy, as I have heard a lady of the Court at that time relate. She said how once when Queen Eleanor was passing by way of Dijon on her way to pay her devotions at the Monastery of the Chartreuse in that region, and to visit the reverend sepulchres of her ancestors, the Dukes of Burgundy, she was curious to have these opened, as many monarchs have done with theirs. Some of the bodies she did find so whole and well preserved she did recognise many of their



features, and amongst others the mouth. Whereupon she did suddenly cry: "Ah! I thought we did take our mouths from them of Austria; but by what I see here, we seem rather to get them from Mary of Burgundy, our ancestress, and the Dukes of Burgundy, our ancestors. If ever I see the Emperor, my brother, I will tell him; nay! I will write him at once." The lady which was then present told me she did herself hear these words, declaring further the Queen did pronounce them as if pleased at her discovery. And in this she was very right, for truly the House of Burgundy was every whit as good as that of Austria, springing as it did from a son of France, Philip le Hardi, from whom they had inherited much wealth and courage and high spirit. Indeed I imagine there were never four greater Dukes, one after the other, than were these four Dukes of Burgundy. Truly I may be charged with everlastingly wandering from my subject; but 'tis an easy matter to excuse me, I think, seeing I have never been taught the art of careful and correct writing.

Our Queen Mary of Hungary then was a most fair and agreeable Princess, and a very amiable, albeit she did show herself somewhat over masculine. But for that she was none the worse for love, nor yet for war, which she did take for her chiefest exercise. The Emperor, her brother, seeing her meet for this work and very apt therein, did send to summon her and beg her to come to him, for to give her the charge of her aunt Marguerite of Flanders had held, which was a very wise Princess and one that did govern his Province of the Low Countries with as much gentleness as the other had used severity. Wherefore so long as she lived, King Francis did never direct his arms toward that quarter, saying he would fain avoid giving

displeasure to so noble a Princess, which did show her so well disposed to France, and so wise and virtuous to boot. Unhappy too beyond her deserts in her marriages, whereof the first was with King Charles VIII., by whom she was while still quite a girl sent back to her father's house; the second with the King of Aragon's son, John by name, of whom she had a posthumous son that died soon after its birth. The third was with the handsome Duke Philibert of Savoy, of whom she had no offspring, and for that cause did bear the device, *Fortune infortune, fors une*. She doth lie with her husband in the beautiful and most splendid Cloister of Brou, near the town of Bourg en Bresse, a Church I have myself visited.

This same Queen of Hungary then did greatly help the Emperor, seeing how isolated he was. 'Twas true he had Ferdinand, King of the Romans, his brother; yet was it all he could do to make head against that great conqueror, the Sultan Soliman. The Emperor had moreover on his hands the affairs of Italy, which was at that time all a-fire; while Germany was little better by reason of the Grand Turk, and he was harassed to boot with Hungary, Spain at the time of its rebellion under M. de Chièvres, the Indies, the Low Countries, Barbary, and France, which last was the most sore burden of all, in a word with the business of nigh half the world, in a manner of speaking. He did make his sister Governess General of all the Netherlands, where by the space of two or three and twenty years she did him such excellent service I really cannot tell what he would have done without her. So he did entrust her with entire charge of the government of those districts, and even when himself was in Flanders, did leave all the management of his provinces in that quar-

ter in her hands. The council was held under her direction and in her apartments even when the Emperor was present and did attend, as I have been told he often did. 'Tis true she was very able and did manage it all for him, reporting to him all that had taken place at the meeting when he was not there, in all which he did find the utmost pleasure. She did carry out some very successful wars too, whether by her generals or in person, always riding a-horse, like a noble-hearted Amazon-queen.

She it was which did first begin those burnings of strongholds in our land of France, destroying thus some of the finest houses and castles, and in especial that of Folembray, a beautiful and agreeable residence our Kings had built them for the delight and pleasure of the chase. At this the King did feel so sore despite and displeasure as that no long while after she did get of him as good as she gave, for he took his revenge on her noble house of Bains, the which was held for one of the marvels of the world, shaming so to speak all other beautiful buildings of the earth, and I have heard those say that had seen it in its perfection, comparable even to the seven wonders of the world, so renowned in Antiquity. 'Twas there she did entertain the Emperor Charles and all his Court, the time when his son, King Philip, came from Spain to Flanders for to visit his father, such excellence and perfection of magnificence being then displayed that naught else was spoke of at the time save only *las fiestas de Bains*, as the Spaniards said. Moreover I do remember on the journey to Bayonne, when some very splendid shows were given, tilting at the ring, combats, masquerades and games, 'twas all naught to be compared with these famous *fiestas de Bains*,—as sundry old Spanish noblemen which had

witnessed them did declare, and as I have seen myself in a Work writ in Spanish on purpose to celebrate them. And it may be certainly said there hath never aught been done or seen finer, equalling even the splendours of Roman days, and copying their old-time sports, always excepting the fights of Gladiators and wild beasts. But with this only exception, the feasts of Bains were finer, more agreeable, as well as more varied and general.

These fêtes I would most dearly love to describe here, according to the particulars I have gleaned from this Spanish work, as well as learned from sundry eye-witnesses, and in especial from Madame de Fontaine, surnamed Torcy, acting as sister for the time being to Queen Eleanor; but I should be blamed as too continually digressing from my subject. So I must e'en keep it for a tid-bit some other time, the matter really meriting full description. Amongst the most splendid of the shows, I will name but this. She had a great fortress of brick, which was assaulted, defended, and relieved by a body of six thousand foot-men of veteran regiments, bombarded by thirty pieces of ordnance, whether in the trenches or on the walls, with all identical methods and ceremonies as in actual war. The siege did last three days and an half, and so fine a sight was never seen; for assaults were delivered, relief brought up, the besieged beaten back, both cavalry and infantry participating in the manœuvres, under charge of the Prince of Piedmont, the place being eventually surrendered on terms, in part favourable, in part rather hard, the garrison being granted their lives and withdrawing under escort. In a word no detail of real war was forgot,—all to the singular gratification of the Emperor.



Rest assured, if the Queen was lavish on that occasion, 'twas but to show her brother that what he had had of him, estates, pensions, benefits, share of his conquests, all was vowed to the further heightening of his glory and pleasure. Wherefore the said Emperor was greatly pleased and did highly commend and approve the great expenditure, and especially that lavished on his own chamber. This was hung with tapestry of a raised warp, all of gold, silver and silk, where were figured and represented in their true colours all the famous conquests, high enterprises, warlike expeditions and battles, he had ever made and won, above all not forgetting the defeat of Soliman before Vienna, and the taking prisoner of King Francis I. In fact there was naught therein that was not of the best and most highly wrought.

But truly the unfortunate mansion did lose all its splendour later, forasmuch as it was utterly devastated, pillaged, ruined and overthrown. I have heard say how its mistress, on learning this ruin, did fall in such distress, despite and fury, that 'twas many days ere she could be appeased. Subsequently, when one day passing near the spot, she was fain to see the remains, and gazing very sadly at these, did swear, the tears in her eyes, that all France should repent the deed and be right sorry for these conflagrations, and that she would never be content till yonder proud Castle of Fontainebleau, whereof folk did make so much, was levelled with the earth and not one stone left on another. And in very deed she did spew out her anger right fiercely over the unhappy land of Picardy, which felt the sore effects of her wrath and the fires she kindled there; and I ween, if truce had not interfered, her vengeance would have been startling. For

she was of a proud and hard heart, and slow to be appeased, and was generally held, of her own people as well as ours, somewhat over cruel; but such is ever the bent of women, especially of high-born women, which be very ready to take vengeance for any offence done them. The Emperor, by all they say, did only love her the more for this.

I have heard tell how, when the Emperor did abdicate at Brussels and strip him of his power, the ceremony being held in a great Hall wherein he had called together an assembly of his Estates, after he had made a set speech and said all he wished to his son, and had likewise humbly thanked his sister, Queen Mary, which was seated by the side of the Emperor her brother, the latter presently rising from her seat, and with a deep reverence to her brother, did address the people with a grave and dignified port and much confidence and grace, and said as follows: "Gentlemen, for these three and twenty years past that my brother, the Emperor, hath been pleased to grant me the charge and government of these Low Countries, I have ever employed in the said task all the means and abilities that God, Nature and Fortune have bestowed on me, for to perform the same to the utmost of my powers. But an if in aught I have made failure, I am surely to be excused, for I think I have never forgot my duty nor spared the proper pains. Yet, and if I *have* lacked in anything, I do beg you to forgive me. However, if there be any one of you will not so do, but is ill content with me and my government, why! 'tis the smallest of my cares, seeing the Emperor, my brother, is well content, and to please him, and him alone, hath ever been the chiefest of my desires and cares." With these words and another

deep reverence to the Emperor, she did resume her seat. I have heard some say this speech was found of many somewhat over proud and haughty, more especially on occasion her giving up her charge and bidding farewell to a people she was about to leave. 'Twould surely have been more natural, had she desired to leave a good savour in their mouth and some grief behind her on her departure. But for all this she had never a thought, seeing her sole end was to please and content her brother, and from henceforth to take no heed of the world but keep her brother company in his retirement and life of prayer.

This account I had of a gentleman of my brother's suite, which was at the time at Brussels, whither he had gone to treat of the ransom of my brother aforesaid, he having been taken prisoner in Hedin, and having spent five years in confinement at Lille in Flanders. The said gentleman was present throughout this assembly and mournful abdication of the Emperor; and did tell me how not a few persons were something scandalized in secret at this haughty pronouncement of the Queen's, yet did never dare say a word or let their opinion appear, seeing plainly they had to do with a masterful dame, which, if angered, would surely before her final departure have done something startling for a last stroke.

Presently freed of all her charge and responsibility, she doth accompany her brother to Spain; which land she did never after quit, either she or her sister Queen Eleanor, till the day of death. Of the three, each did survive the other by one year; the Emperor died first, the Queen of France next, being the eldest, then the Queen of Hungary after the two others, her brother and sister. Both sisters did behave them wisely and well in widowhood; the Queen

of Hungary was a longer time widow than her sister, and did never marry again, while her sister did so twice, partly to be Queen of France, a dainty morsel, partly by the prayers and persuasion of the Emperor; to the end she might be a sure pledge of peace and public quietness. Not that the said pledge did avail for long while, for War brake out again presently, as cruel as ever. However this was no fault of the poor Princess, who did all she could. Yet for all that did King Francis, her husband, treat her but scurvily, hating and abominating the connection, as I have been told.

## 4.



**A**FTER the departure of the Queen of Hungary there was left no great Princess with King Philip (now Sovereign Lord invested with his domains in the Netherlands and elsewhere), but only the Duchesse de Lorraine, Christina of Denmark, his cousin german, later entitled Her Highness, which did always hold him good company, so long as he tarried in these parts. She did add much to the brilliance of his Court, for truly no Court, whether of King, Prince, Emperor or Monarch, no matter how magnificent it be, is of much account, if it be not accompanied and seconded by a Queen's or Empress's Court, or at least a great Princess's, and thereat a good abundance of noble dames and damsels, as both myself have observed and have heard pronouncement to the same effect in the highest quarters.

This said Princess was in mine opinion one of the most beauteous and most well accomplished Princesses I have ever seen,—in face very fair and pleasing, her figure very



tall and fine, her conversation agreeable, and above all her dress most excellent. In fact all her life she was the pattern and model of fashion to all the ladies of France. This mode of dressing head and hair and arranging the veil was known as the Lorraine way, and 'twas a pretty sight to see our Court ladies so attired. These were ever a-making grand fêtes and splendid shows, the better thereat to show off their dainty adornments, all being *à la Lorraine* and copied after Her Highness. In especial she had one of the prettiest hands ever seen; and I have heard the Queen Mother herself praise the same, and liken it to her own for perfection. She had an excellent seat on horseback, and rode with no little grace, always using the stirrup attached to the saddle, the mode whereof she had learned of the Queen Marie, her aunt, and the Queen Mother, so I have heard say of her; for previously she had ridden with help of the old-fashioned "planchette,"<sup>1</sup> which was far from properly showing off her grace and her elegant seat like the stirrup. In all this she was for imitating the Queen her aunt, never mounting any but Spanish horses, Turks, Barbs and the very best jennets, which could go well at the amble. Of such I have seen a dozen capital mounts at one time in her stable, all so excellent, 'twere impossible to say one was better than another. The said aunt did love her dearly, as well for the exercises they both were fond of, hunting, riding and the like, as for her virtues, the which she did observe in her. Accordingly, after her marriage, she did often go to visit her in Flanders, as I have heard Madame de Fontaines relate; and indeed after she became a widow, and especially after her son had been taken from her, she did quit Lorraine altogether in despite, so proud and high of heart

was she. She did thereafter take up her abode with the Emperor her uncle and the Queens her aunts, all which great personages did receive her with no small pleasure.

She did bear exceeding hardly the loss and absence of her son, and this in spite of all possible excuses which King Henri did make her, and his declared intention of adopting him as his son. But presently, finding no assuagement, and seeing how they were giving him one M. de La Brousse as tutor, instead of the one he now had, namely M. de Montbardon, a very wise and honourable gentleman the Emperor himself had assigned to that office, having long known him for a worthy man, for he had been in the service of M. de Bourbon, and was a French refugee, the Princess, thinking all desperate, did seek out King Henri one Holy Thursday in the great Gallery at Nancy, where all his Court was assembled. Thus, with an assured grace and that great beauty which did make her yet more admirable, she did advance, with no undue awe or any sort of abasement at his grandeur, albeit bowing low in reverence before him; and in suppliant wise, with tears in her eyes, the which did but make her more fair and more delightsome to look upon, did remonstrate with the King as to the wrong he was doing her in taking away her son,—the dearest possession she had in all the world. Little did she deserve, she added, so harsh treatment, seeing the high station she was born in and the fact she had never dreamed of doing aught to his disservice. All this she said so well and with so excellent a grace, with reasoning so cogent and complaint so pitiful, as that the King, always very courteous toward ladies, was deeply stirred with compassion,—and not he alone,

but all the Lords and Princes, great and small, which were present at the sight.

The King, who was the most respectful monarch toward ladies hath ever been in France, did answer her in very honourable terms, albeit with no rigmarole of words nor by way of set harangue, as Paradin doth represent the matter in his *History of France*; for indeed of his nature this monarch was not so prolix, nor copious in reasons and fine speeches, nor a mighty orator. Neither had he any need to be, nor is it becoming that a King should play the philosopher and rhetorician, the shortest replies and briefest questions being more meet for him and more becoming. This I have heard argued by not a few great men, amongst others by M. de Pibrac, whose judgment was much to be relied on by reason of the competence of knowledge he did possess. Moreover any one that shall read the speech as given by Paradin, as supposed by him to have been delivered in this place by King Henri, will credit never a word of it; besides which, I have heard positively from a number of great folk which were there present that he did not make any such lengthy harangue as the historian saith.

'Tis quite true at the same time that he did condole with her in very honourable and proper phrase on her alleged grievance, saying she had no real reason to be troubled thereat, for that 'twas to assure the lad's estate, and not out of any selfish hostility toward him, he was fain to have her son by his side, and to keep him along with his own son and heir, to share his bringing up and fashion of life and fortune. Further that himself being French, and the boy of French extraction, he could scarce be better off than to be reared at the French Court and

among French folk, where he had so many kinsmen and friends. In especial he forgat not to add how the house of Lorraine did lie under greater obligation to that of France than to any other in all Christendom, alleging the countenance given by France to the Duke of Lorraine as against Duke Charles of Burgundy, that was slain before Nancy. For that 'twas an undoubted truth to say that but for that Country's help, the said Duke would have utterly undone the Duke of Lorraine and his Duchy to boot, and made him the most unhappy Prince in the world. He did further allege the gratitude they of the House of Lorraine did owe to the French, for the great assistance rendered them by the latter in their successes in the Holy Wars and conquests of Jerusalem, and the Kingdom of Naples and Sicily. Further he did declare how neither his natural bent nor true interests were like to set him on ruining and undoing Princes, but rather to help the same in all ways, when in danger and difficulty,—as he had actually done to the little Queen of Scots, a near kinswoman of his son, to the Duke of Parma, as well as to Germany, that was so sore pressed it was nigh coming to utter ruin without such help. The same kindness and generosity, he said, was his motive for taking the young Prince of Lorraine under his protection, for to bring him up to an higher estate than else he could aspire to, and make him his son by marrying him eventually to one of his own daughters; in fine that she had no sort of call to be afflicted at his action.

Yet could not all these fine words and excellent reasons in any wise calm her grief, neither enable her to bear her loss one whit more patiently. So presently with another deep reverence, and still shedding many pathetic tears,



she did withdraw her to her own chamber, the King himself conducting her to the door thereof. Next day, before quitting the place, he did visit her in her chamber to bid her farewell, but without her winning any concession as to her petition. Accordingly having thus seen her beloved son torn from her and carried away to France, she did resolve for her part to leave Lorraine altogether and retire to Flanders to the side of her uncle the Emperor (oh! the fine sound of that word) and to the company of her cousin King Philip and the Queens her aunts—a noble alliance and a great! This she did; and did never leave Flanders more, till after conclusion of the peace betwixt the two Kings, when he of Spain took ship and sailed away for that country.

To the making of the said peace she did no little avail, my! rather was the chiefest contributor thereto. For the delegates of the one side and the other, by what I have heard said, after having laboured and sweated all in vain at Cercan for several days, without arranging or settling aught, were still at fault and off the scent, as we say in hunting, when she, whether inspired by wisdom from on high or urged thereto by Christian zeal and her own kind heart, did take up the chase, and carry this important negotiation to a good end and one so fortunate to all Christian peoples. And of a truth 'twas said no other could have been found so meet to move and set in place this great corner stone, seeing she was a lady of skill and experience if ever there was one, as well as of high and weighty authority,—and there can be never a doubt but petty, low-born folk are not so apt for the like business as great personages be. For this and many other reasons the King her cousin did feel much trust and

confidence in her, well knowing her good qualities. He did ever love her well, bearing her much affection and esteem; and indeed she did help him much and contribute greatly to the splendour and renown of his Court, the which without her would have sorely lacked brilliancy. Yet afterward, I have been told, he did show her but poor gratitude and treated her scurvily with regard to her lands which did fall to her for jointure in the Duchy of Milan, where she had been married in first wedlock with the Duke Sforza; for by what I have been informed, he did rob her and bring her short of some portion of these.

I have heard it said that after the loss of her son, she did remain very ill content with the Duc de Guise and the great Cardinal her brother, holding them to blame for having advised the King to that course, by reason of their ambition, both because they were fain to see their near cousin adopted as son and married within the House of France, and because she had some while before refused M. de Guise in marriage, which had sent to her to make such offer. She being one of the proudest of womankind, made answer she would never wed the younger son of the house whereof she had been wife of the eldest. For this rebuff the Duke did ever after bear her a grudge, and this although he did lose naught in his subsequent marriage, his wife being of a most illustrious house and granddaughter of a King, Louis XII., one of the best and bravest monarchs have ever sat on the French throne,—and what is more, being one of the most beautiful women in Christendom.

Hereanent I have heard tell how the first time these two beauteous Princesses met, both were so curious to mark one the other, whether directing their gaze straight in

## LIVES OF FAIR AND GALLANT LADIES

the face, or askance or sideways, as that neither could look long enough, so set were they and eager to examine each other's charms. I leave you to fancy all the divers thoughts must have traversed these fair ladies' minds. Just so we do read how a little before the great battle was fought in Africa betwixt Scipio and Hannibal, which did put a final end to the War of Rome and Carthage, how previous to its beginning, they did come together in a short truce of some two hours' duration. Whenas they were approached near each other, there the twain of them stood some little while wrapped in contemplation one of the other, each thinking of the valour of the other, so renowned by their exploits and so well represented in their gallant visages, their persons, and their fine, warlike ways and bearing. Then after so tarrying entranced in these noble dreams the one of the other, they did presently set them to negotiation after the fashion Livy hath so well described. Thus valour doth make itself esteemed in the midst of enmity and hate, as doth beauty in the midst of mutual jealousy,—as proven in the case of the two fair Princesses I have spoke of.

Truly the beauty and charming grace of these twain might well be pronounced equal, only that Madame de Guise mayhap did in some ways bear the bell. But she was well content to surpass her rival in these qualities only, never a whit in pride and high bearing; for indeed she was the most gentle, good, condescending and affable Princess ever known, albeit she could show herself at need high-spirited and gallant. Nature had framed her so, no less by reason of her tall and noble figure than of her dignified port and stately carriage, so that to look at her a man might well fear and think twice about address-



ing her in speech, yet having plucked up courage so to accost her, naught would he find in her but all sweetness, candour and good-nature,—these pleasant qualities being inherited from her grandfather, the good father of his people, and the kindly French habit. 'Tis true enough however she knew very well how to keep her dignity and show her pride, when need was. I do hope to further speak of her specially in another place.

Her Highness of Lorraine on the contrary was exceeding proud and somewhat overweening. This myself did note on sundry occasions in her bearing toward the Queen of Scots, who after she was a widow, did make a journey to Lorraine, where I then was. Not seldom you would have thought the aforesaid proud Princess was eager to take advantage and encroach somewhat upon the unhappy Queen's majesty. Yet the latter, who was a woman of the world and of a high spirit, did never give her occasion to glory over her or in any wise encroach on her dignity, albeit her bearing was always gentleness itself. Indeed the Cardinal her brother had duly warned her and given her an inkling of the haughty humour of the said Princess.

Never could this latter entirely rid her of her pride, yet was she fain to modify the same somewhat toward the Queen Mother (Catherine de Medici), when they met. Verily 'twas pride against pride; for the Queen Mother was the very proudest woman in all the world, when need was, as I have myself seen, and heard the same character given her of many great personages,—and above all if it were necessary to lower the pride of some presumptuous person, for she would ever contrive to abase such to the very bowels of the earth. Yet did she always bear herself courteously toward her Highness, treating her with suf-



ficient deference and respect, yet ever keeping a tight rein, hand high or hand low as occasion did demand, for fear she should mayhap forget herself and presume on some liberty; and myself did hear her twice or thrice declare, "Yonder is the proudest woman I ever saw!" This was at the time she came to the coronation of our late King Charles IX. at Reims, whither she was invited. On her entry into that city, she would not ride a-horseback, fearing thereby to derogate something of her dignity and rank, but did arrive in a coach magnificently furnished, all covered with black velvet, by reason of her widowhood, and drawn by four white barbs, the finest could anywhere be chosen, harnessed four abreast, as it had been a triumphal chariot. Herself was at the carriage door, splendidly attired, though all in black, in a velvet robe, but her head dress all of white, magnificently arranged and set off. At the other door was one of her daughters, which was after Duchess of Bavaria; and within, her maid of honour, the Princess of Macedonia. The Queen Mother, desiring to see her enter the outer court in this triumphant guise, did set her at a window, exclaiming in an undertone, "Oh! the haughty dame it is!" Presently when she had stepped down from her carriage and mounted to the great hall above, the Queen did go forward to meet her only so far as the midmost of the hall, or mayhap a little farther and somewhat nearer the entrance door than the upper end. Yet did she receive her very graciously, and showed her great honour; for at the time she was ruler in all things, in view of the youth of the King her son, and did govern him and make him entirely conform to her good pleasure. All the Court, great and small alike, did esteem and much admire the

said Princess, and much appreciate her beauty, albeit she was coming nigh the decline of her years, which might then be something over forty; yet was no sign of change or decay in her, her Autumn altogether surpassing other women's Summer. None can do other than think highly of this fair Princess, seeing how beautiful she was, and yet did safeguard her widowhood to the tomb, and so inviolably and chastely, indulging in no third marriage, keep her faith to the manes of her husband.

She did die within a year after hearing the news of her being Queen of Denmark, whence she did spring, and the Kingdom of which had fallen to her. In this wise before her death she did see her title of Highness, the which she had borne so long, changed to that of Majesty, which yet was hers but a short while, less than six months in all. I ween she would gladly enough have borne the old title still, an if she could have kept therewith her erstwhile bloom of youth and beauty, for truly all empires and kingdoms be as nothing compared with youth. Natheless was it an honour and consolation to her before her death to bear this name of Queen; but for all this, by what I have heard say, she was firm resolved not to go to her kingdom, but to finish out the rest of her days on her jointure lands in Italy, at Tortona. And the folk of that country did call her naught else but the Lady of Tortona—not a very grand title and quite unworthy of her. Thither she had retired a good while before her decease, as well for sake of certain vows she had sworn to perform at the holy places of that region, as to be nearer the baths of those parts; for she had fallen into bad health and grown exceeding gouty.

Her life was spent in very pious, holy and honourable

exercises,—praying God and giving much alms and charity toward the poor, and above all toward widows, among whom she did not forget the unfortunate Madame Castellane of Milan, the which we have seen at Court dragging out a miserable existence, had it not been for the help of the Queen Mother, which did always provide her somewhat to live on. She was daughter of the Princess of Macedonia, being a scion of that great house. Myself have seen her a venerable and aged dame; and she had been governess to her Highness. The latter, learning the extreme poverty wherein the poor lady did live, sent to seek her out, and had her brought to her side and did treat her so well she never more felt the sore distress she had endured in France.

Such is the summary account I have been able to give of this great and noble Princess, and how, a widow and a very beautiful woman, she lived a most wise and prudent life. True, it may be said she was married previously to the Duke Sforza. Well and good! but he did die immediately after, and they were married less than a year, and she was made a widow at fifteen or sixteen. Whereupon her uncle the Emperor did wed her to the Duke of Lorraine, the better to strengthen himself in his divers alliances. But once again she was widowed in the flower of her age, having enjoyed her fine marriage but a very few years. The days which were left her, the best of her life and those most highly to be valued and most delightfully to be enjoyed, these she did deliberately spend in a retired and chaste widowhood.

Well! seeing I am on the subject, I must e'en speak of some other fair widows in briefest phrase,—and first of one of former days, that noble widow, Blanche de Mont-

ferrat, one of the great and ancient houses of Italy, which was Duchess of Savoy and the most beauteous and most perfect Princess of her time, and one of the most prudent and well advised. So well and wisely did she govern her son's minority and his lands, that never was seen so prudent a dame and so excellent a mother, left a widow as she was at three and twenty.

She it was which did receive so honourably the young King Charles VIII., on his way to his Kingdom of Naples, in all her lands, and above all in her good town of Turin, where she did afford him a very stately entry. Herself was pleased to be present, and did walk in the progress very sumptuously attired, showing she well understood her dignity as a great lady; for she was in imposing array, clad in a long robe of cloth of gold fretted, and all bordered with great diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and other rich jewels. Her head likewise was encircled with the like precious stones, while at her neck she wore a necklace or collar of huge Oriental pearls of priceless worth, and on her arms bracelets of the same. She was mounted on a fine white hackney, very magnificently caparisoned and led by six tall lackeys, dressed in figured cloth of gold. Following her came a large company of damsels, very richly, neatly and charmingly dressed in the Piedmontese fashion, that 'twas a pleasure to see them, and after these a very strong body of gentlemen and knights of the country. Then after her train did enter and march into the city King Charles himself under a rich canopy of state, lighting down at length at the Castle, where he was lodged. There at the Gate, before entering in, the Duchess of Savoy did present her son to him, which was yet a mere boy; after which she did make



him a very excellent speech of welcome, putting at his service all her lands and goods, both her own and those of her son. This courtesy the King did accept with gratitude, thanking her heartily and expressing great obligation to her. Through all the city were to be seen the scutcheons of France and of Savoy, bound together with a true lovers' knot, uniting the two scutcheons and the two blazons, with these words, *Sanguinis arctus amor* (Close the tie of blood), as described in the *Chronicle of Savoy*.

I have heard sundry of our fathers and mothers, which had it of their own parents as eye-witnesses, and in especial of the noble lady, the Séneschale de Poitou, my grandmother, who was then a maid of honour at the Court, declare how in those days naught else was talked of but the beauty, wisdom and prudence of this same Princess, and how all the Courtiers and gallants of the King's suite, when they were returned back to France from their journey thither, were forever discoursing of her and entertaining the dames and damsels of the Court with praises of her beauty and virtue, and the King more than any, which did show every sign of being smit to the heart with love for so beautiful a lady.

Yet apart from her beauty altogether, he had much occasion to love her well; for she did help him by every means she could, and did even strip her of all her precious stones, pearls and jewelry, to lend them him to raise money on in whatsoever way seemed good to him. This was indeed a great obligation and sacrifice, seeing what great attachment women do always have for their precious stones, rings and jewelry, so as they would almost rather lend and put in pawn some precious part of their own

body than their wealth of such things; I mean some would, though not of course all. At any rate the kindness done was a very great one; for but for this generosity, and likewise that of the Marquise de Montferrat, another very noble and very fair lady, he would have come to downright shame in no long time, and must have returned from his expedition before it was half done, having undertaken the same without money. Herein he was in the like sorry case with a certain French Bishop that went to the Council of Trent without money and without Latin. Verily a putting to sea without biscuit! Yet is there a difference 'twixt the two; for what the one did was of his fine, high spirit and noble ambition, the which did close his eyes to all inconveniences, finding naught impossible to a brave heart, whereas the other was in lack both of mother wit and proper experience, offending out of sheer ignorance and stupidity, unless indeed it were that he hoped to send round the bag when he got to his destination.

In the description given of this magnificent entry I have spoke of just above, is to be noted the splendour of the attire and adornments of this same Princess, which were more in accord (some will say) with what is becoming a wife than a widow. On this the ladies did say at the time that, to welcome so great a King, she might well be excused so far, albeit he did hardly claim so great expenditure; and further that great folk, men and women, be a law to themselves, and that in those days widows, so they said, were not so straightlaced and exact in their dress as they have been for the last forty years. The fact is a certain great lady I wot of, being in high favour with a King, indeed his mistress, did dress her somewhat

in more quiet and modest garb than most, yet always in silk, to the end she might the better conceal and hide her game; wherefore the widows then at Court, being fain to imitate her, did adopt the same fashion. Natheless was she by no means so strict with herself, nor so stern in her moderation, but that she dressed both prettily and richly, only all in black and white, displaying more worldliness therein than did exactly accord with strict widow's weeds, and in especial ever making a point of showing her beautiful bosom.

Myself did hear the Queen, mother of King Henri III., on occasion of the coronation and marriage of that monarch, say the same: how that widows in days gone by had not the same carefulness as to their attire, modest bearing and strict life, as nowadays. She had seen this in the time of King Francis, who did love an easy-going Court in all respects. Widows did even dance thereat, and were taken as partners as readily as maids or wives. In fact she did once command and beg M. de Vaudemont, by way of honouring the occasion, to lead out the Dowager Princess of Condé to the dance. This he did, and danced a full round with her, as they which were present for the coronation, as I was myself, did see and well remember. Such the freedom widows did then enjoy. Nowadays all this is forbid them as if 'twere a sacrilege, as also the wearing of colours, for none now dare wear aught but black and white; though as for underskirts and petticoats, these as well as their stockings, may be grey, drab, violet or blue. Some indeed I have seen which have so far indulged them as to adopt red, scarlet and chamois-yellow, as in former days; for they could then wear any colour

for bodices and stockings, though not for robes, by what I am told.

Moreover this same Duchess we have been speaking of might well enough wear such a robe of cloth of gold, seeing 'twas her proper ducal habit and state costume, and therefore becoming and lawful, for to display the sovereignty and high dignity of her exalted rank. And this is even now done by our Countesses and Duchesses, the which can and do wear the robes belonging to their several orders on state occasions. Only our widows of to-day dare under no circumstances wear jewelry, except only in rings, and on mirrors and *Books of Hours* and the like, and set in handsome belts, but not on neck or arms, or even any great display of pearls in necklaces and bracelets. Yet I do declare solemnly I have seen widows as becomingly attired in their white and black, and every whit as attractively, as some of our tawdrily dressed wives and maids.

## 5.



HOWEVER enough said concerning this foreign Princess. 'Tis time to say somewhat of our French Princesses, and I would wish first to deal with our fair and unsullied Queen, Louise de Lorraine, wife of King Henri III., late deceased. This Princess can and ought to be commended on many grounds. In her marriage she did bear her towards the King her husband so wisely, modestly and loyally, as that the knot wherewith she was bound in wedlock with him did always remain so firm and indissoluble, no breaking or slackness of the same was ever found, and this although



the King did sometimes wander elsewhither to satisfy his passions, as great folks will, the which have a special freedom accorded them. Beside this, quite at the very beginning of their married life, in fact within ten days of their union, he did give her no slight cause for displeasure, for that he did deprive her of her women of the chamber and maids of honour, which had ever been with her and in her service, when still a girl, whereat she was exceeding sorry. 'Twas a heavy blow to her affection, in especial for Mlle. de Changy, a very fair and most honourable damsel, and one little deserving to be banished the company of her mistress and expelled the Court. Indeed 'tis ever a sore despite to lose a trusty companion and confidante. I have heard how one day a lady, one of her most privy friends, was presuming enough to chide her and urge, by way of jest and half-serious flaunt, that, seeing she could never have children by the King, for many reasons then commonly alleged, she would do well to borrow secret aid of some third person, for to have offspring, to the end she might not be left without authority, supposing her husband did chance to die, but might some day very like be Queen Mother of a King of France, and hold the same rank and high estate as the Queen mother-in-law. But the lady did long regret her counsel, semi-burlesque as it was; for the Queen took the same exceeding ill, and did never after like her worthy adviser, preferring to base her dignity on her chastity and virtuous life rather than on a lineage sprung of evil-doing. Still the advice, in a worldly point of view and according to Macchiavelli's doctrine, was not to be despised.

Very different was the behaviour, so 'tis said, of Queen Mary of England, third wife of King Louis XII. Being

but ill-content and distrustful of the feebleness of the King her husband, she was fain to sound these waters for herself, taking for guide in crossing the ford the noble Comte d'Angoulême, the same which was afterward King Francis, then a young, handsome and charming Prince, to whom she did show much favour, always addressing him as "My excellent son-in-law;" as indeed he was, having already married Madame Claude, daughter of King Louis. The fact is she was smit with love for him; and he on seeing her was in much the same case. The end was the pair were very nigh coming together, the which they would surely have done but for the late M. de Grignaux, a nobleman of honour and good birth from Périgord, a prudent and well advised man, who had been gentleman in waiting to the Queen Anne, as we have above said, and was so still to Queen Mary. He seeing the play was very like to come off, did chide the aforesaid Comte d'Angoulême for the fault he was about to commit, saying with an angry energy: "Nay! by the Risen God (this was his favourite oath), what would you be at? See you not this woman, keen and cunning as she is, is fain to draw you to her, to the end you may get her with child? But an if she come to have a son, what of you? You are still plain Comte d'Angoulême, and never King of France, as you do hope to be. The King her husband is old, and cannot now make her children. You must needs meddle and go with her, you with your young hot blood, and she the same, and by the Risen Lord! the end will be she will just catch on like a limed bird, conceive you a child, and there you are! After that you've only to say, 'Good-bye! my chance of the fair Kingdom of France!' Wherefore I say, reflect."

In fact the said Queen was for practising and proving true the Spanish saw or proverb, which saith, *munca muger aguda murio sin herederos*, "no clever woman ever died without heirs;" or in other words, an if her husband make her none, she will call in other help to get her end. Now M. d'Angoulême *did* reflect and sware he was going to be wise and refrain; yet tried and tempted again and again with the wiles and advances of the fair Englishwoman, did presently throw him more fiercely than ever into the pursuit of her. Such the effects of love and passion! such the power of a mere bit of flesh and blood, that for its sake men will surrender kingdoms and empires, and altogether lose the same, as we find over and over again in History. Eventually M. de Grignaux, seeing the young man was bent on his own undoing and the carrying further of his amour, told Madame d'Angoulême, his mother, of the matter, which did so reprove and smartly chide him, as that he gave up the sport once and for all.

None the less 'tis said the Queen did all she could to live and reign as Queen Mother for some little while before and after the death of the King her husband. However she lost him too soon, and had no sufficient time to carry through her purpose. Yet even so, she did spread the report, after the King's death, that she was pregnant. Accordingly, albeit naught really inside her belly, 'tis said she would swell out the outside thereof by means of linen wrappages gradually more and more every day, and that when her full time was come, she did propose to have ready a supposititious child of another woman, and produce this at the instant of her pretended delivery. But the Queen Regent, which was from Savoy and knew somewhat about child-bearing and the like, seeing things were

going somewhat too fast for her and her son, had her so well watched and examined of physicians and midwives, that her wrappages and clouts being noted, she was found out and baulked in her design, and instead of being Queen Mother was incontinently sent back to her own country.

See the difference betwixt this Princess Mary and our good Queen Louise, which was so wise, chaste and virtuous, she did never desire, whether by true or false pretence, to be Queen Mother. But an if she had wished to play the like game as other, there would have been little difficulty, for there was none to watch her with any care,—and 'twould have sore surprised not a few. And for her behaviour our present King doth owe her much thanks, and should love and honour her greatly; for an if she had played this game, and had brought forward an infant, her own or another's, the King instead of being what he is, would have been but a Regent of France, mayhap not even that. And this feeble title would ill have guarded him from many more wars and troubles than he hath actually had.

I have heard some, both men of religion and of the world, hold and maintain this opinion: that our Queen would have done better to have played this part, and that in that case France would never have endured so much wretchedness, poverty and ruin as she hath now, and is like to have, and the True Faith better supported into the bargain. As to this I can but refer me to those gallant and curious questioners which do debate these points (but myself do believe never a word of it, for we be all right well satisfied with our King, God save him!) for them to pronounce judgment thereon; for they have a fine subject, and one admitting wide discussion as to the



State's best interests, though not as to God's, as seemeth me. To Him our Queen hath always been deeply devoted, loving and adoring Him so well, that to serve Him, she would e'en forget herself and her high estate. For being a very beauteous Princess (the King indeed did choose her for her beauty and high virtues), and young, tender and most charming, she did give up herself to naught else but only to serve God, do her devotions, visit constantly the hospitals, heal the sick and bury the dead, forgetting nor omitting any of the good and holy works which in this province the holy devout and righteous ladies, Princesses and Queens of days of yore, did practise in the early Church. After the death of her husband, she did ever lead the same life, spending her time in weeping and mourning for him, beseeching God for his soul; and in fact her life as a widow was of the same holy character as her married life had been.

'Tis true she was supposed, during her husband's lifetime, to have leaned somewhat to the side of the party of the *Union*, because, being so good a Christian and Catholic as she was, she did naturally prefer them which were fighting and contending for her Faith and Religion; yet did she never more favour them, but quitted their faction altogether, after their assassination of her husband, though claiming no other vengeance or punishment as a right but what it should please God to inflict, not that she did not duly petition men, and above all our King, with whom lieth the performing of justice for this monstrous deed of a man of religion.<sup>1</sup> Thus both in married life and widowhood, did this excellent Princess live blameless. Eventually she died in the enjoyment of a most noble and worthy repute, having long languished in sick-

ness and grown hectic and parched,—’twas said owing to her overmuch indulgence in sorrow. She made a very excellent and pious end. Just before her death, she had her crown placed at the head of her bed close beside her, and would never have it removed from there so long as she yet lived, directing that after her death she should be crowned and so remain till her body was laid beneath the ground.

She did leave behind her a sister, Madame de Joyeuse, which was her counterpart in her chaste and modest life, and did make great mourning and lamentation for her husband; and verily he was a brave, valiant and well accomplished Lord. Beside, I have heard say, how when our present King was in such straits, and shut up and imprisoned as in a bag in Dieppe, which the Duc du Maine held invested with forty thousand men, that an if she had been in the place of the Commander of the town De Chastes, she would have had revenge of the death of her husband in a very different fashion from the said worthy Commander, who for the obligations he lay under to M. de Joyeuse, ought never to have surrendered, in her opinion. Nor did she ever like the man afterward, but did hate him worse than the plague, being unable to excuse a fault as he had committed, albeit others deem him to have kept faith and loyalty according to his promises. But then an angry woman, be the original cause of offence just or unjust, will take no satisfaction; and this was the way with this Princess, who could never bring herself to like our reigning monarch, though she did sore regret the late King and wore mourning for him, and this although she did belong to the *League*; for she always declared both her husband and she did lie under many obligations to

him. In fine, she is a good and a wise Princess, and one that is honoured by the grief and respect she did show to the ashes of her husband,—for some while that is, for eventually she did marry again with M. de Luxembourg. So young as she was, was she to consume away in vain regrets forever?

## 6.

**T**HE Duchesse de Guise, Catherine of Clèves, one of the three daughters of the house of Nevers (all three Princesses that can surely never be enough commended, no less for their beauty than for their virtue and on whom I have writ a separate chapter in another place), hath celebrated and doth celebrate all her days in right worthy fashion the irreparable loss of her noble husband; but indeed what a husband was he! He was truly the nonpareil of the world, and this and no less she did call him in sundry of her letters, the which she writ to some of her most familiar friends and lady companions, which myself also did see after her bereavement, showing them plainly therein by the sad and mournful words she used with what sore regrets her soul was wounded.

Her noble sister-in-law, Madame de Montpensier, of whom I do hope to speak further elsewhere, did also bewail her husband bitterly. Albeit she did lose him when still very young, and beautiful and charming for many perfections both of mind and body, she did never think of marrying again,—and this although she had wedded him when a mere child in years, and he might have been her grandfather, so that she had tasted but sparely with

him of the fruits of wedlock. Yet would she never consent to indulge a second taste of the same and make up her defect and arrears in that kind by another marriage.

I have heard not a few noblemen, gentlemen and great ladies oftentimes express their wonder that the Princesse de Condé, the Dowager Princess I mean, of the house of Longueville, did always refuse to marry again, seeing how she was one of the most beautiful ladies in all France, and one of the most desirable. But she did remain satisfied with her condition of widowhood, and would never take a second husband, and this though left a widow very young.

The Marquise de Rothelin, her mother, did the like, who beautiful woman as she was, died a widow. Verily mother and daughter both might well have set afire a whole kingdom with their lovely eyes and sweet looks, the which were renowned at Court and through France for the most charming and alluring ever seen. And doubtless they did fire many hearts; yet never a word was ever to be spoke of love or marriage, both having loyally kept the faith once pledged to their dead husbands, and never married again.

I should never have done if I were to name all the Princesses of our Kings' Courts in similar case. I must e'en defer their panegyric to another place. So I will leave them now, and say somewhat of sundry other ladies, which though no Princesses, be yet of as illustrious race and generous heart as they.

Fulvia Mirandola, Madame de Randan, of the noble house of Admirande, did remain unwed, though left a widow in the flower of her age and her exquisite beauty. So great mourning did she make over her loss, that never



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more would she deign to look at herself in her mirror, but refused the sight of her lovely face to the pellucid crystal that was so fain to see the same. Her act though not her words were like those of an ancient dame, which breaking her mirror and dedicating the fragments to Venus, spake these words to the Goddess:

Dico tibi Veneri speculum, quai cernere talem  
Qualis sum nolo, qualis eram nequeo.

(To thee, Venus, I do dedicate my mirror, for such as I am now, I care not to see myself, and such as I was, I cannot more.)

Not that Madame de Randam did scorn her mirror for this reason, for indeed she was very beautiful, but by reason of a vow she had made to her husband's shade, who was one of the best and noblest gentlemen of all France. For his sake she did altogether leave the world and its vanities, dressing her always very soberly. She wore a veil habitually, never showing her hair; yet spite of careless head-dress and her neglect of appearances, her great beauty was none the less manifest. The late M. de Guise, late deceased, was used always to call her naught but *the nun*; for she was attired and put on like a religious. This he would say by way of jest and merriment with her; for he did admire and honour her greatly, seeing how well affectioned and attached she was to his service and all his house.

Madame de Carnavalet, twice a widow, did refuse to wed for the third time with M. d'Espernon, then known as M. de la Valette the younger, and at the commencement of his

high favour at Court. So deep was he in love with her, that unable to get of her what he would so fain have had, for truly she was a very lovely widow and very charming, he did follow her up persistently and press her sore to marry him, inducing the King three or four times over to speak to her in his favour. Yet would she never put herself again under a husband's yoke. She had been married twice, her first husband being the Comte de Montravel, the second M. de Carnavalet. And when her most privy friends, myself first and foremost, who was much her admirer, did chide her for her fault she was committing in refusing so high a match, one that would place her in the very midmost and focus of greatness, wealth, riches, favour and every dignity, seeing how M. de la Valette was chiefest favourite of the King, and deemed of him only second to himself, she would answer: that her delight lay not at all in these things, but in her own free-will and the perfect liberty and satisfaction.

Madame de Bourdeille, sprung of the illustrious and ancient house of Montbron and of the Counts of Périgord and Viscounts of Aunay, being left a widow at the age of seven or eight and thirty, a very beautiful woman (and I do think that in all Guienne, of which province she was, was never another that in her day did surpass her in beauty, charm and good looks, for indeed she had one of the finest, tallest and most gracious figures could anywhere be seen, and if the body was fair the mind was to match), being so desirable and now widowed, was wooed and sought after in marriage by three great and wealthy Lords. To them all she made reply as follows: "I will not say, as many dames do, that they will never, never marry again, adding such asseverations you can in no

wise doubt their firm intention. But I am ready to declare that, unless God and my carnal being give me not very different desire to what I feel at this present, and change me utterly, I have very surely said farewell forever to matrimony." Then when another did further object: "Nay! Madam, but would you wish to burn away in the flower of your age?" she added: "I wot not what you mean by burning away; but I do assure you that up to the present hour, it hath never yet been possible for me to warm me even, all alone in my bed which is widowed and cold as ice. Yet in the company of a second husband, I say not but that, coming nigh his fire, I might not mayhap burn as you say. But forasmuch as cold is more easy to endure than heat, I am resolved to continue in my present condition, and abstain from a second marriage." And this resolve she did so express, she hath kept to this day, having remained a widow twelve years, without losing aught of her beauty, ever maintaining and holding sacred one fixed determination. This is truly a great obligation to her husband's ashes, and a testimony how well she loved him, as well as an exceeding binding claim on her children to honour her memory forever, seeing how she did end her days a widow.

The late M. d'Estrozze was one of the aspirants to her hand, and had had his wishes conveyed to her. But great, noble and allied with the Queen Mother as he was, she did refuse the match, excusing herself in seemly terms. Yet what a strange humour, after all, to be beautiful, honourable and a very rich heiress, and finish out one's days over a pen or a solitary seam, lone and cold as ice, and spend so many widowed nights! Oh! how many dames there be of a very different complexion,—though not a few also

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of the like! But an if I were for citing all these, I should never have ended; and especially if I should include among our Christian ladies those of pagan times. Of these was that right fair, and good and gentle Roman lady of yore, Martia, second daughter of Cato of Utica, sister to Portia, who after losing her husband incessantly bewailing the said loss, being asked when would be the last day of her mourning, did make answer 'twould be only when the last day of her life should come. Moreover being both very beautiful and very rich, she was more than once asked when she would marry again, to which she replied: " 'Twill be when I can find a man that will marry me rather for my merits than for my wealth." And God knoweth she was both rich and beautiful, and no less virtuous, than either, nay! far more so; else had she not been Cato's daughter nor Portia's sister. Yet did she pass this rebuff on her lovers and suitors, and would have it they did seek her for her wealth and not for her merits and virtues, albeit she was as well furnished with these as any. Thus did she readily rid her of these importunate gallants.

Saint Jerome in a letter he wrote to one Principia, a virgin, doth celebrate the praises of a gentle Roman lady of his time, which was named Marcella, of a good and noble house, and sprung from a countless line of consuls, pro-consuls, Praetors, and one that had been left a widow very young. She was much sought after, both for her youth and for the antiquity of her house, as well as for her lovely figure, the which did singularly entrance the will of men (so saith Saint Jerome, using these very words; note his observation), and her seemly mien and virtuous character. Among other suitors was a rich and



high-born Roman Lord, likewise of Consular rank, and by name Cerealis, which did eagerly seek to persuade her to give him her hand in second marriage. Being something far stricken in years, he did promise her great wealth and superb gifts as chiefest advantage in the match. Above all her mother, Albina by name, did strongly urge her to the marriage, thinking it an excellent offer and one not lightly to be refused. But she made answer: "An if I had any wish to throw myself in the water and entangle me in the bonds of a second marriage, and not rather vow me to a second chastity, yet would I fain prefer to get me an husband rather an inheritance." Then, the lover deeming she had said this with an eye to his advanced age, he made reply: that old folk might very well live long, and young ones die early. But she retorted: "True, the young may die early, but an old man cannot live long." At which word he did take umbrage, and so left her. I find this fair lady's saying admirable and her resolve most commendable.

Not less so was that of Martia, named above, whose behaviour was not so open to reproof as that of her sister Portia. For the latter, after the death of her husband, did determine to live no longer, but kill herself. Then all instruments of iron being removed, wherewith she might have taken her life, she did swallow live coals, and so burned all her inwards, declaring that for a brave woman means can never be lacking whereby to contrive her death. This hath been well told by Martial in one of his Epigrams, writ expressly on this lady's fate, and a fine poem it is. Yet did she not, according to certain philosophers, and in especial Aristotle in his Ethics, (speaking of courage or fortitude) show herein any high

degree of courage or magnanimity in killing herself, as many others have done, and her own husband; for that, to avoid a greater ill, they do throw themselves upon the less. On this point I have writ a discourse elsewhere.

Be this as it may, 'twould surely have been better, had this same Portia rather devoted her days to mourning her husband and avenging his death than in contriving her own. For this did serve no good end whatsoever, except mayhap a gratification of her own pique, as I have heard some women say in blame of her action. Natheless for myself, I cannot enough commend her, and all other widows, which do show their love for their dead husbands as lively as in their lifetime. And this is why Saint Paul hath so highly praised and commended them, holding this doctrine of his great Master. Yet have I been taught of some of the most clear sighted and most eloquent persons I know, that beautiful young widows which do remain in that condition in the very flower of their sweet age and heyday of their life, do exercise an over great cruelty upon themselves and nature, so to conspire against their own selves, and refuse to taste again the gentle joys of a second marriage. This much doth divine law no less than human allow them, as well as nature, youth and beauty; yet must they needs abstain in obedience to some vow and obstinate resolve, the which they have fantastically determined in their silly heads to keep to the vain and empty simulacra of their husbands, that standing like sentinels forgot in the other world, and dwelling yonder in the Elysian fields, be either altogether careless of them and their doings or mayhap do but deride the same. On this question generally all such dames should refer them to the eloquent remonstrances and

excellent arguments the which Anna doth bring forward to her sister Dido, in the Fourth Book of the Aeneid. These be most excellent for to teach a fair young widow not over sternly to swear a vow of never altering her condition, rather out of bigotry than real religion. An if after their husbands' death, they should be crowned with fair chaplets of flowers or herbs, as was the custom of yore, and as is still done with young maids in our day, this triumph would be good and creditable while it lasted, and not of over long duration. But now all that may be given them, is a few words of admiration, the which do vanish into air so soon as spoken and perish as quick as the dead man's corse. Well then, let all fair young widows recognise the world and its claims, since they be of it still, and leave religion to old women and the strait rule to perpetual widowhood.

## 7.



ELL! enough said of widows which go fasting. 'Tis time now to speak of another sort, to wit those which detesting all vows and abnegations against second marriages, do wed again and once more claim the aid of the gentle and agreeable God Hymen. Of such there be some which, over fond of their admirers during their husband's life, be already dreaming of another match before these be well dead, planning aforehand betwixt them and their lovers the sort of life they will lead together: "Ah, me! an if mine husband were but dead," they say, "we would do this, we would do that; we would live after this pleasant fashion, we would arrange it after that,—and all so discreetly none should

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ever suspect our bygone loves. A right merry life we would have of it then; we would go to Paris, to Court, and bear us so wisely naught should ever do us hurt. You would pay court to such and such a great lady, I to such and such a great nobleman; we would get this from the King, and that. We would get our children provided with tutors and guardians, and have never a care for their property and governance. Rather would we be making our fortunes, or else enjoying theirs, pending their coming of age. We would have plenishing enough, with that of mine husband to boot; the last for sure we could not lack, for I wot well where be the title deeds and good crown pieces. In a word, who so happy as we should be?"—and so on and so on.

Such the fine words and pleasant plans these wives do indulge in to their lovers by anticipation. Some of them do only kill their husbands in wishes, words, hopes and longings; but others there be that do actually haste them on the way to the tomb, if they be over laggard. Cases of this sort have been, and are yet to-day, more plenty before our Courts of Law and Parliaments than any would suppose. But verily 'tis better and more agreeable they do not as did a certain Spanish dame. For being ill treated of her husband, she did kill him, and afterward herself, having first writ this epitaph following, which she left on the table in her closet, indited in her own hand:

Aqui yaze qui a buscado una muger,  
Y con ella casado, no l'ha podido hazer muger,  
A las otras, no a mi, cerca mi, dava contentamiento,  
Y pore este, y su flaqueza y atrevimiento,  
Yo lo he matado,



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Por le dar pena de su pecado:

Ya my tan bien, por falta de my juyzio,

Y por dar fin à la mal-adventura qu'yo aviô.

(Here lieth one which did seek a wife, yet could not satisfy a wife; to other women, but not me, though near me, he would give contentment. And for this, and for his cowardice and insolence, I have killed him, to punish him for his sins. Myself likewise I have done to death, for lack of understanding, and to make an end of the unhappy life I had.)

This lady was named Donna Madallena de Soria, the which, in the judgment of some, did a fine thing to kill her husband for the wrong he had done her; but did no less foolishly to slay herself,—and indeed she doth admit as much, saying “for lack of understanding she did herself to death.” She had done better to have led a merry life afterward, were it not, mayhap, she did fear the law and dread to get within its clutches, wherefore she did prefer to triumph over herself rather than trust her reputation to the authority of the Judges. I can assure you, there have always been, and are yet women more astute than this; for they do play their game so cunningly and covertly, that lo! you have the husband gone to another world, and themselves living a merry life and getting their complaisant gallants to give 'em no mere artificial joys with *godemiches* and the like, but the good, sound, real article.

Other widows there be which do show more wisdom, virtue and love toward their late husbands, with never a suspicion of cruelty toward these. Rather they do mourn, lament and bewail them with such extremity of sorrow you would think they would not live one hour more. “Alackaday!” they cry, “am not I the most unhappy

woman in all the world, and the most ill-starred to have lost so precious a possession? Gracious God! why dost not kill me straight, that I may follow him presently to the tomb? Nay! I care not to live on after him; for what is left me in this world or can ever come to me, to give me solace? An it were not for these babes he hath left me in pledge, and that they do yet need some stay, verily I would kill myself this very minute. Cursed be the hour ever I was born! If only I might see his ghost, or behold him in a vision or dream, or by some magic art, how blessed should I be e'en now! Oh! sweetheart, sweet soul! can I in no way follow thee in death? Yea! I will follow thee, so soon as, free from all human hindrance, I may be alone and do myself to death. What could make my life worth living, now I have had so irreparable a loss? With thee alive I could have no other wish but to live; with thee dead, no wish but only to die! Well, well! is't not better for me to die now in thy love and favour and mine own good repute and satisfaction, than to drag on so sorrowful and unhappy a life, wherein is never a scrap of credit to be gotten? Great God! what ills and torments I endure by thine absence! what a sweet deliverance, an if I might but see thee soon again, what a crown of bliss! Alas! he was so handsome, he was so lovable! He was another Mars, another Adonis! and more than all, he was so kind, and loved me so true, and treated me so fondly! In one word, in losing him, I have lost all mine happiness."

Such and an infinity of the like words do our heart-broken widows indulge in after the death of their husbands. Some will make their moan in one way, others in another, but always something to the effect of what I have set down. Some do cry out on heaven, others curse this earth

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of ours ; some do blaspheme God, others vent their spleen on the world. Some again do feign to swoon, while others counterfeit death ; some faint away, and others pretend to be mad and desperate and out of their wits, knowing no one and refusing to speak. In a word, I should never have done, if I were to try to specify all the false, feigned, affected tricks they do use for to prove their grief and mourning to the world. Of course I speak not of all, but of some, and a fine few these be and a good round number.

Good folk of either sex that would console suchlike doleful widows, thinking no ill and supposing their grief genuine, do but lose their pains and none is a whit the better. Others again of these comforters, when they see the poor suffering object of their solicitude failing to keep up the farce and make the proper grimaces, do instruct them in their part, like a certain great lady I wot of, which would tell her daughter, "Now faint, my pet ; you don't show near enough concern."

Then presently, after all these wondrous rites performed, just like a torrent that after dashing headlong down its course, doth anon subside again and quietly return to its bed, or like a river that hath overflowed its banks, so you will see these widows recover them and return to their former complexion, gradually get back their spirits, begin to be merry once again and dream of worldly vanities. Instead of the death's-heads they were used to wear, whether painted, engraven or in relief, instead of dead men's bones set crosswise or enclosed in coffins, instead of tears, whether of jet or of enamelled gold, or simply painted, you will see them now adopt portraits of their husbands worn round the neck, though still adorned with death's-heads and tears painted in

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scrolls and the like, in fact sundry little gewgaws, yet all so prettily set off that spectators suppose they do use and wear the same rather by way of mourning for their deceased husbands than for worldly show. Then presently, just as we see young birds, whenas they quit the parental nest, do not at the very first make very long flights, but fluttering from branch to branch do little by little learn the use of their wings, so these widows, quitting their mourning habits and desperate grief, do not appear in public at once, but taking greater and greater freedom by degrees, do at last throw off their mourning altogether, and toss their widows' weeds and flowing veil to the dogs, as the saying is, and letting love more than ever fill their heads, do dream of naught else but only a second marriage or other return to wanton living. So we find their great and violent sorrow hath no long duration. It had been better far to have exercised more moderation in their sorrow.

I knew once a very fair lady, which after her husband's death was so woebegone and utterly cast down that she would tear her hair, and disfigure her cheeks and bosom, pulling the longest face ever she could. And when folk did chide her for doing such wrong to her lovely countenance, "My God!" she would cry, "what would you have? What use is my pretty face to me now? Who should I safeguard it for, seeing mine husband is no more?" Yet some eight months later, who but she is making up her face with Spanish white and rouge and besprinkling her locks with powder,—a marvellous change truly?

Hereof I will cite an excellent example, for to prove my contention, that of a fair and honourable lady of Ephesus, which having lost her husband could find no consolation



whatever in spite of all efforts of kinsmen and friends. Accordingly following her husband's funeral, with endless grief and sorrow, with sobs, cries, tears and lamentations, after he was duly put away in the charnel-house where his body was to rest, she did throw herself therein in spite of all that could be done to hinder, swearing and protesting stoutly she would never leave that place, but would there tarry to the end and finish her days beside her husband's corpse and never, never abandon the same. This resolution she did hold to, and did actually so live by the space of two or three days. Meantime, as fortune would have it, a man of those parts was executed for some crime and hanged in the city, and afterward carried forth the walls to the gibbets there situate to the end of the bodies of malefactors so hanged and put to death should there remain for an example to others, carefully watched by a band of officers and soldiers to prevent their being carried off. So it fell out that a soldier that was guarding the body, and was standing sentry, did hear near by a very lamentable voice crying and approaching perceived 'twas in the charnel-house. Having gone down therein, he beheld the said lady, as fair and beautiful as day, all bathed in tears and lamenting sore; and accosting her, set him to enquiring the reason of her pitiful state, the which she told him gently enough. Thereupon doing his endeavours to console her grief, but naught succeeding for the first time, he did return again and once again. Finally he was enabled to gain his point, and did little by little comfort her and got her to dry her eyes; till at length hearkening to reason, she did yield so far as that he had her twice over, holding her on her back on the very coffin of her husband, which did serve as their couch. This done,

they did swear marriage, one with the other; after which happy consummation, the soldier did return to his duty, to guard the gibbet,—for 'twas a matter of life and death to him. But fortunate as he had been in this fine enterprise of his and its carrying out, his misfortune now was such that while he was so inordinately taking his pleasure, lo! the kinsfolk of the poor dangling criminal did steal up, for to cut the body down, an if they should find it unguarded. So finding no guard there, they did cut it down with all speed, and carried the corpse away with them swiftly, to bury it where they might, to the end they might rid them of so great dishonour and a sight so foul and hateful to the dead man's kindred. The soldier coming up and finding the body a-missing, hied him in despair to his mistress, to tell her his calamity and how he was ruined and undone; for the law of that country was that any soldier which should sleep on guard and suffer the body to be carried off, should he put in its place and hanged instead, which risk he did thus run. The lady, who had but now been consoled of him, and had felt sore need of comfort for herself, did quick find the like for him, and said as follows: "Be not afeared; only come help me to lift mine husband from his tomb, and we will hang him and set him up in place of the other; so they will take him for the other." No sooner said than done. Moreover 'tis said the first occupant of the gibbet had had an ear cut off; so she did the same to the second, the better to preserve the likeness. Next day the officers of justice did visit the place, but found naught amiss. Thus did she save her gallant by a most abominable deed and wicked act toward her husband,—the very same woman, I would have you note, which had so grievously deplored and lamented

his loss, so that no man would ever have expected so shameful an issue.

The first time ever I heard this history, 'twas told by M. d'Aurat, which did relate it to the gallant M. du Gua and sundry that were dining with him. M. du Gua was not one to fail to appreciate such a tale and to profit thereby, no man in all the world loving better a good anecdote or better able to turn the same to account. Accordingly soon after, being come into the Queen's chamber, he saw there a young, new-made widow, but just bereaved and all disconsolate, her veil drawn half way down her face, sad and pitiful, with scarce a word for any man. Of a sudden M. du Gua said to me: "Dost see yonder widow? well! before a year be out, she will one day be doing as the lady of Ephesus did." And so she did, though not altogether so shamefully; but she did marry a man of base condition, even as M. du Gua had foretold.

The same story I had also of M. de Beau-Joyeux, valet of the chamber to the Queen Mother, and the best violin player in Christendom. Not only was he perfect in his art and music generally, but he was likewise of an amiable disposition, and well instructed, above all in excellent tales and fine stories, little known and of rare quality. Of these he was by no means niggardly with his more intimate friends, and beside could relate sundry from his own experience, for in his day he had both seen many good love adventures and had not a few of his own; for what with his noble gift of music and his good, bold spirit, two weapons very meet for love, he could carry far. The Maréchal de Brissac had given him to the Queen Mother, having sent him to her from Piedmont with his company of violins, the whole most exquisite and complete. He was

then called Baltazarin, but did after change his name. Of his composition were those pretty ballets that be always danced at Court. He was a great friend of M. du Gua and myself; and we would often converse together. On these occasions he had always some good tale ready to tell, especially of love and ladies' wiles. Among such he did tell us that of the lady of Ephesus, already heard from M. d'Aurat, as I have mentioned, who said he had it from Lampridius. Since then I have read it also in the *Book of Obsequies* (des Funérailles), a right excellent work, dedicated to the late M. de Savoie.

The author might surely have spared us this digression, some may object. Yea!—but then I was fain to make mention of my friend hereanent, which did oft bring the story to my mind, whenever he beheld any of our woe-begone widows. “Look!” he would exclaim, “see yonder one that will some day play the part of our lady of Ephesus, or else mayhap she hath played it already.” And by my faith, ’twas a mighty strange tragi-comedy, an act full of heartlessness, so cruelly to insult her dead husband.

At the massacre of the Saint Bartholomew was slain the Seigneur de Pleuviau, who in his time had been a right gallant soldier, without a doubt, in the War of Tuscany under M. de Soubise, as well as in the Civil War, as he did plainly show at the battle of Jarnac, being in command of a regiment there, and in the siege of Niort. Some while after the soldier which had killed him did inform his late wife, all distraught with grief and tears,—she was both beautiful and wealthy,—that an if she would not marry him, he would kill her and make her go the same way as her husband; for at that merry time, ’twas



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all fighting and cut-throat work. The unhappy woman accordingly, which was still both young and fair, was constrained, for to save her life, to celebrate wedding and funeral all in one. Yet was she very excusable; for indeed what could a poor fragile, feeble woman have done else, unless it had been to kill herself, or give her tender bosom to the murderous steel? But verily

Le temps n'est plus, belle bergeronnette,  
(Those days be done, fair shepherdess;)

and these fond fanatics of yore exist no more. Beside, doth not our holy Christian faith forbid it? This is a grand excuse for all widows nowadays, who always say,—and if 'twere not forbid of God, they would kill themselves. Thus do they mask their inaction.

At this same massacre was made another widow, a lady of very good family and most beauteous and charming. The same, while, yet in the first desolation of widowhood, was forced by a gentleman that I know well enough by name; whereat was she so bewildered and disconsolate she did well nigh lose her senses for some while. Yet presently after she did recover her wits and making the best of her widowhood and going back little by little to worldly vanities and regaining her natural lively spirits, did forget her wrongs and make a new match, gallant and high-born. And in this I ween she did well.

I will tell yet another story of this massacre. Another lady which was there made a widow by the death of her husband, murdered like the rest, was in such sorrow and despair thereat, that whenever she did set eyes on a poor unoffending Catholic, even though he had not

taken part in the celebration at all, she would either faint away altogether, or would gaze at him with as much horror and detestation as though he were the plague. To enter Paris, nay! to look at it from anywhere in the neighbourhood within two miles, was not to be thought of, for neither eyes nor heart could bear the sight. To see it, say I?—why! she could not bear so much as to hear it named. At the end of two years, however, she did think better, and hies her away willingly enough to greet the good town, and visit the same, and drive to the Palace in her coach. Yet rather than pass by the Rue de la Huchette, where her husband had been killed, she would have thrown herself headlong into fire and destruction rather than into the said street,—being herein like the serpent, which according to Pliny, doth so abhor the shade of the ash as that 'twill rather adventure into the most blazing fire than under this tree so hateful is it to the creature.

In fact, the late King, the then reigning King's brother, was used to declare he had never seen a woman so desperate and haggard at her loss and grief as this lady, and that 'twould end by their having to bring her down and hood her, as they do with haggard falcons. But after some while he found she was prettily enough tamed of her own accord, in such sort she would suffer herself to be hooded quite quietly and privily, without any bringing down but her own will. Then after some while more, what must she be at but embrace her Paris with open arms and regard its pleasures with a very favourable eye, parading hither and thither through its streets, traversing the city up and down, and measuring its length and breadth this way and that, without ever a thought of any vow to the

contrary. Mighty surprised was I myself one day, on returning from a journey, after an absence of eight months from Court, when after making my bow to the King, I did suddenly behold this same widow entering the great Hall of the Louvre, all tricked out and bedecked, accompanied by her kinswomen and friends, and there appearing before the King and Queen, the Royal personages and all the Court, and there receiving the first orders of marriage, affiancing to wit, at the hands of a Prelate, the Bishop of Digne, Grand Almoner of the Queen of Navarre. Who so astonished as I? Yet by what she did tell me after, she was even more astounded, whenas thinking me far away, she saw me among the noble company present at her affiancing, standing there gazing at her and challenging her with mine eyes. Neither of us could forget the oaths and affirmations made betwixt us, for I had been her admirer and suitor for her hand and indeed she thought I had come thither of set purpose to appear on the appointed day to be witness against her and judge of her faithlessness, and condemn her false behaviour. She told me further, how that she would liever have given ten thousand crowns of her wealth than that I should have appeared as I did, and so helped to raise up her conscience against her.

I once knew a very great lady, a widowed Countess, of the highest family, which did the like. For being a Huguenot of the most rigorous sort, she did agree to a match with a very honourable Catholic gentleman. But the sad thing was that before the completion of the marriage, a pestilential fever that was epidemic at Paris did seize her so sore as to bring her to her end. In her anguish, she did give way to many and bitter regrets, crying:

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"Alas! can it be that in a great city like Paris, where all learning doth abound, never a doctor can be found to cure me! Nay! let him never stop for money; I will give him enough and to spare. At any rate 'twere not so bitter, an if my death had but come after my marriage, and my husband had learned first how well I loved and honoured him!" (Sophonisba said differently, for she did repent her of having wedded before drinking the poison.) Saying these and other words of like tenour the poor Countess did turn her to the other side of the bed, and so died. Truly this is the very fervour of love, so to go about to remember, in midst of the Stygian passage to oblivion, the pleasures and fruits of passion she would so fain have tasted of, before quitting the garden!

I have heard speak of another lady, which being sick unto death, overhearing one of her kinsfolk abusing another (yet are they very worthy folk really), and upbraiding her with the enormous size of her parts, she did start a-laughing and cried out, "You pair of fools, you!" and so turning o' the other side, she did pass away with the laugh on her lips.

Well! an if these Huguenot dames have made such matches, I have likewise known plenty of Catholic ladies that have done the same, and wedded Huguenot husbands, and that after using every hang-dog expression of them and their religion. If I were to put them all down, I should never have done. And this is why your widow should always be prudent, and not make so much noise at the first beginning of her widowhood, screaming and crying, making storms of thunder and lightning, with tears for rain, only afterward to give up her shield of defence and get well laughed at for her pains. Better far it



were to say less, and do more. But themselves do say to this: "Nay! nay! at the first beginning we must needs steel our hearts like a murderer, and put on a bold front, resolved to swallow every shame. This doth last a while, but only a while; then presently, after being chief dish on the table and most observed of all, we be left alone and another takes our place."

I have read in a little Spanish work how Vittoria Colonna, daughter of the great Fabrice Colonna, and wife to the great and famous Marquis de Pescaire, the nonpareil of his time, after losing her husband,—and God alone knoweth how good an one he was,—did fall into such despair and grief 'twas impossible to give or afford her any consolation whatever. When any did offer any form of comfort, old or new, she would answer them: "For what would you give me consolation?—for my husband that is dead? Nay! you deceive yourselves; he is not dead. He is yet alive, I tell you, and stirring within mine heart. I do feel him, every day and every night, come to life and move and be born again in me." Very noble words indeed these had been, if only after some while, having taken farewell of him and sent him on his way over Acheron, she had not married again with the Abbé de Farfe,—an ill match to the noble Pescaire. I mean not in family, for he was of the noble house of the Des Ursins, the which is as good, and eke as ancient, as that of Avalos,—or more so. But the merits of the one did far outweigh those of the other, for truly those of Pescaire were inestimable, and his valour beyond compare, while the said Abbé, albeit he gave much proof of his bravery, and did work very faithfully and doughtily in the service of King Francis, was yet employed only in small, obscure and

light emprises, far different from those of the other, which had wrought great and conspicuous deeds, and won right famous victories. Moreover the profession of arms followed by the Marquis, begun and regularly pursued from his youth up, could not but be finer far than that of a churchman, which had but late in life taken up the hardier calling.

Saying this, I mean not to imply thereby think ill of any which after being vowed to God and the service of his Church, have broke the vow and left the profession of religion for to set hands to weapons of war; else should I be wronging many and many a great Captain that hath been a priest first and gone through this experience.

## 8.



**C**ÆSAR BORGIA, Duc de Valentinois, was he not first of all a Cardinal, the same which afterward was so great a Captain that Macchiavelli, the venerable instructor of Princes and great folk, doth set him down for example and mirror to all his fellows, to follow after and mould them on him? Then we have had the famous Maréchal de Foix, which was first a Churchman and known as the Protonotary de Foix, but afterward became a great Captain. The Maréchal Strozzi likewise was first vowed to holy Church; but for a red hat which was refused him, did quit the cassock and take to arms. M. de Salvoison, of whom I have spoke before (which did follow close at the former's heels, and was as fit as he to bear the title of great Captain,—and indeed would have marched side by side with him, an if he had been of as great a house,

and kinsman of the Queen), was, by original profession, a wearer of the long robe; yet what a soldier was he! Truly he would have been beyond compare, if only he had lived longer. Then the Maréchal de Bellegarde, did he not carry the lawyer cap, being long named the Provost of Ours? The late M. d'Enghien, the same that fell at the battle of St. Quentin, had been a Bishop; the Chevalier de Bonnivet the same. Likewise that gallant soldier M. de Martigues had been of the Church; and, in brief, an host of others, whose names I cannot spare paper to fill in. I must say a word too of mine own people, and not without good cause. Captain Bourdeille, mine own brother, erst the Rodomont of Piedmont in all ways, was first dedicate to the Church. But not finding that to be his natural bent, he did change his cassock for a soldier's jacket, and in a turn of the hand did make him one of the best and most valiant captains in all Piedmont. He would for sure have become a great and famous man, had he not died, alas! at only five and twenty years of age.

In our own day and at our own Court of France, we have seen many such, and above all our little friend, the noble Clermont-Tallard, whom I had seen as Abbé of Bon-Port, but who afterward leaving his Abbey, was seen in our army and at Court, one of the bravest, most valiant and worthy men of the time. This he did show right well by his glorious death at La Rochelle, the very first time we did enter the fosse of that fortress. I could name a thousand such, only I should never have done. M. de Soleillas,<sup>1</sup> known as the young Oraison, had been Bishop of Riez and after had a regiment, serving his King right faithfully and valiantly in Guienne, under the Maréchal de Matignon.

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## LIVES OF FAIR AND GALLANT LADIES

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In short I should never have done, an if I were for enumerating all such cases. Wherefore I do stop, both for brevity's sake, and also for fear I be reproached for that I indulge overmuch in digressions. Yet is this one not inopportune I have made, when speaking of Vittoria Colonna which did marry the Abbé. An if she had not married again with him, she had better deserved her name and title of Vittoria, by being victorious over herself. Seeing she could not find a second husband to match the first, she should have refrained her altogether.

I have known many ladies which have copied her however. One I knew did marry one of mine uncles, the most brave, valiant and perfect gentleman of his time. After his death, she did marry another as much like him as an ass to a Spanish charger; but 'twas mine uncle was the Spanish steed. Another lady I knew once, which had wedded a Marshal of France, a handsome, honourable gentleman and a valiant; in second wedlock she did take one in every way his opposite, and one that had been a Churchman too. What was yet more blameworthy in her was this, that on going to Court, where she had not appeared for twenty years, not indeed since her second marriage, she did re-adopt the name and title of her first husband. This is a matter our courts of law and parliament should look into and legislate against; for I have seen an host of others which have done the like, herein unduly scorning their later husbands, and showing them unwilling to bear their name after their death. For having committed the fault, why! they should drink the cup to the dregs and feel themselves bound by what they have done.

Another widow I once knew, on her husband's dying,



did make such sore lamentation and so despairing by the space of a whole year, that 'twas hourly expected to see her dead right off. At the end of a year, when she was to leave off her heavy mourning and take to the lighter, she said to one of her women: "Prithee, pull me in that crêpe becomingly; for mayhap I may make another conquest." But immediately she did interrupt herself: "Nay! what am I talking about? I am dreaming. Better die than have anything more to do with such follies." Yet after her mourning was complete, she did marry again to a husband very unequal to the first. "But,"—and this is what these women always say,—“he was of as good family as the other.” Yes! I admit it; but then, what of virtue and worth? are not these more worth counting than all else? The best I find in it all is this, that the match once made, their joy therein is far from long; for God doth allow them to be properly ill-treated of their new lords and bullied. Soon you will see them all repentance,—when it is too late.

These dames which do thus re-marry have some opinion or fancy in their heads we wot not of. So have I heard speak of a Spanish lady, which desiring to marry again, when they did remonstrate with her, asking what was to become of the fond love her husband had borne her, did make answer: *La muerte del marido y nuevo casamiento no han de romper el amor d' una casta muger*, —“The death of husband and a new marriage should in no wise break up the love of a good woman.” Well! so much shall be granted, an if you please. Another Spanish dame said better, when they were for marrying her again: *Si hallo un marido bueno, no quiero tener el temor de perderlo; y si malo, que necesidad he del*,—“An if I find

a good husband, I wish not to be exposed to the fear of losing him; but if a bad, what need to have one at all?"

Valeria, a Roman lady, having lost her husband, whenas some of her companions were condoling with her on his loss and death, said thus to them: "'Tis too true he is dead for you all, but he liveth in me for ever." The fair Marquise I have spoke of a little above, had borrowed a like phrase from her. These expressions of these noble ladies do differ much from what a Spanish ill-wisher of the sex declared, to wit: *que la jornada de la biudez d' una muger es d' un dia*,—"that the day of a woman's widowhood is one day long." A lady I must now tell of did much worse. This was Madame de Moneins, whose husband was King's lieutenant, and was massacred at Bordeaux, by the common folk in a salt-excise riot. So soon as ever news was brought her that her husband had been killed and had met the fate he did, she did straight cry out: "Alas! my diamond, what hath become of it?" This she had given him by way of marriage present, being worth ten to twelve hundred crowns of the money of the day, and he was used to wear it always on his finger. By this exclamation she did let folk plainly see which grief she did bear the more hardly, the loss of her husband or that of the diamond.

Madame d'Estampes was a high favourite with King Francis, and for that cause little loved of her husband. Once when some widow or other came to her asking her pity for her widowed state, "Why! dear heart," said she, "you are only too happy in your condition, for I tell you, one cannot be a widow by wishing for't,"—as if implying she would love to be one. Some women be so situate, others not.

But what are we to say of widows which do keep their marriage hid, and will not have it published? One such I knew, which did keep hers under press for more than seven or eight years, without ever consenting to get it printed and put in circulation. 'Twas said she did so out of terror of her son, as yet only a youth, but afterward one of the bravest and most honourable men in all the world, lest he should play the deuce with her and her man, albeit he was of very high rank. But so soon as ever her son fell in a warlike engagement, dying so as to win a crown of glory, she did at once have her marriage printed off and published abroad.

I have heard of another widow, a great lady, which was married to a very great nobleman and Prince, more than fifteen years ago. Yet doth the world know nor hear aught thereof, so secret and discreet is it kept. Report saith the Prince was afeared of his mother-in-law, which was very imperious with him, and was most unwilling he should marry again because of his young children.

I knew another very great lady, which died but a short while ago, having been married to a simple gentleman for more than twenty years, without its being known at all, except by mere gossip and hearsay. Ho! but there be some queer cases of the sort!

I have heard it stated by a lady of a great and ancient house, how that the late Cardinal du Bellay was wedded, being then Bishop and Cardinal, to Madame de Chastillon, and did die a married man. This she did declare in a conversation she held with M. de Mane, a Provençal, of the house of Senjal and Bishop of Fréjus, which had served the said Cardinal for fifteen years at the Court of

Rome, and had been one of his privy protonotaries. Well! happening to speak of the Cardinal, she did ask M. de Mane if he had ever told him or confessed to him that he was married. Who so astounded as M. de Mane at such a question? He is yet alive and can contradict me, if I lie; for I was present. He made answer he had never heard him speak of it, either to him or to others. "Well, then! I am the first to tell you," she replied; "for nothing is more true than that he was so married; and he died actually the husband of the said Madame de Chastillon, before a widow." I can assure you I had a fine laugh, seeing the astonished face of poor M. de Mane, who was a very careful and religious man, and thought he knew every secret of his late master; but he was out of court for this one. And indeed 'twas a scandalous license on the Cardinal's part, considering the sacred office he held.

This Madame de Chastillon was the widow of the late M. de Chastillon, the same which was said to chiefly govern the young King Charles VIII. along with Bourdillon, Galiot and Bonneval, the guardians of the blood royal. He died at Ferrara, having been wounded at the siege of Ravenna, and carried thither to be healed. She became a widow when very young, being both fair and also wise and virtuous,—albeit but in appearance, as witness this marriage of hers,—and so was chosen maid of honour to the late Queen of Navarre. She it was that did tender the excellent advice to this noble lady and great Princess, which is writ in the *Cent Nouvelles* of the said Queen. The tale is of her and a certain gentleman which had slipped by night into her bed by a little trap-door in the wainscot beside her bed, and was fain to enjoy the reward



of his address; yet did win naught but some fine scratches on his pretty face. The Queen being purposed to make complaint of the matter to her brother, he did remonstrate with her very judiciously, as may be read in the *Nouvelle* or Tale in question, and did give her the excellent advice referred to, as good and judicious and as well adapted to avoid scandal as could possibly be devised. Indeed it might have been a First President of the Parliament of Paris that gave the advice, which did show plainly, however, the lady to be no less skilled and experienced in such mysteries than wise and judicious; wherefore there can be little doubt she did keep her affair with the Cardinal right well hidden.

My grandmother, the Séneschale de Poitou, had her place after her death, by choice of King Francis himself, which did name and elect her to the post, sending all the way to her home to summon her. Then he did give her over with his own hand to the Queen his sister, forasmuch as he knew her to be a very prudent and very virtuous lady,—indeed he was used to call her *my knight without reproach*,—albeit not so experienced, adroit and cunning in suchlike matters as her predecessor, nor one that had contracted a second marriage under the rose. But an if you would know who are intended in the Tale, 'twas writ of the Queen of Navarre herself and the Admiral de Bonnivet, as I have been assured by my grandmother. Yet doth it appear to me the Queen need never have been at pains to conceal her name, seeing the other could get no hold over her virtue, but did leave her all in confusion. Indeed she was only too wishful to make the facts public, had it not been for the good and wise advice given her by that same maid of honour, Madame de Chas-

tillon. Anyone that hath read the Tale will find it as I have represented it. And I do believe that the Cardinal, her husband as aforesaid, which was one of the cleverest and wisest, most eloquent, learned and well-advised men of his day, had instilled this discreetness in her mind, to make her speak so well and give such excellent counsel. The tale might mayhap be thought somewhat over scandalous by some in view of the sacred and priestly profession of the Cardinal; but, an if any be fain to repeat the same, well! he must e'en suppress the name.

Well! if this marriage was kept secret, 'twas by no means so with that of the last Cardinal de Chastillon. For indeed he did divulge and make it public quite enough himself, without need to borrow any trumpet; and did die a married man, without ever having quitted his gown and red hat. On the one hand he did excuse himself by alleging the reformed faith, whereof he was a firm adherent; on the other by the contention that he was desirous of still retaining his rank and not giving up the same (a thing he would most surely never have done in any case), so as he might continue of the council, whereof being a member he could well serve his faith and party. For 'tis very true he was a most able, influential and very powerful personage.

I do imagine the aforementioned noble Cardinal du Bellay may have done the like for like reasons. For at that time he was no little inclined to the faith and doctrine of Luther, and indeed the Court of France generally was somewhat affected by the taint. The fact is, all novelties be pleasing at first, and beside, the said doctrine did open an agreeable license to all men, and especially to ecclesiastics, to enter the married state.

## 9.

**H**OWEVER let us say no more of these dignified folk, in view of the deep respect we do owe their order and holy rank. We must now something put through their paces those old widows we wot of that have not six teeth left in their chops, and yet do marry again. 'Tis no long while ago that a lady of Guienne, already widowed of three husbands, did marry for a fourth a gentleman of some position in that province, she being then eighty. I know not why she did it, seeing she was very rich and had crowns in plenty,—indeed 'twas for this the gentleman did run after her,—unless it were that she was fain not to surrender just yet, but to win more amorous laurels to add to her old ones, as Mademoiselle Sevin, the Queen of Navarre's jester, was used to say.

Another great lady I knew, which did remarry at the age of seventy-six, wedding a gentleman of a lower rank than her previous husband, and did live to an hundred. Yet did she continue beautiful to the last, having been one of the finest women of her time, and one that had gotten every sort of delight out of her young body, both as wife and widow, so 'twas said.

Truly a formidable pair of women, and of a right hot complexion! And indeed I have heard experienced bakers declare how that an old oven is far easier to heat than a new one, and when once heated, doth better keep its heat and make better bread.

I wot not what savoury appetites they be which do stir

husbands and lovers to prefer these hot-loaf dainties; but I have seen many gallant and brave gentlemen no less eager in love, nay! more eager, for old women than for young. They tell me 'twas to get worldly profit of them; but some I have seen also, which did love such with most ardent passion, without winning aught from their purse at all, except that of their person. So have we all seen erstwhile a very great and sovran Prince,<sup>1</sup> which did so ardently love a great dame, a widow and advanced in years, that he did desert his wife and all other women, no matter how young and lovely, for to sleep with her only. Yet herein was he well advised, seeing she was one of the fairest and most delightful women could ever be seen, and for sure her winter was better worth than the spring-tide, summer and autumn of the rest. Men which have had dealings with the courtesans of Italy have seen, and do still see, not a few cases where lovers do choose the most famous and long experienced in preference, and those that have most shaken their skirts, hoping with them to find something more alluring in body or in wit. And this is why the beauteous Cleopatra, being summoned of Mark Antony to come see him, was moved with no apprehension, being well assured that, inasmuch as she had known how to captivate Julius Cæsar and Cnæus Pompeius, the son of Pompey the Great, when she was yet but a slip of a girl, and knew not thoroughly the ways and wiles of her trade, she could manage better still her new lover, a very fleshly and coarse soldier of a man, now that she was in the full fruition of her experience and ripe age. Nor did she fail. In fact, the truth is that, while youth is most meet to attract the love of some men, with others 'tis maturity, a sufficient age, a practised wit,



a long experience, a well-hung tongue and a well trained hand, that do best serve to seduce them.

There is one doubtful point as to which I did one time ask doctors' opinion,—a question suggested by one who asked why his health was not better, seeing all his life long he had never known nor touched old women, according to the physicians' aphorism which saith: *vetulam non cognovi*, "I have known never an old woman." Among many other quaint matters, be sure of this,—these doctors did tell me an old proverb which saith: "In an old barn is fine threshing, but an old flail is good for naught." Others say: "Never mind how old a beast be, so it will bear." I was told moreover that in their practice they had known old women which were so ardent and hot-blooded, that cohabiting with a young man, they do draw all ever they can from him, taking whatever he hath of substance, the better to moisten their own drouth; I speak of such as by reason of age be dried up and lack proper humours. The same medical authorities did give me other reasons to boot; but an if readers be still curious, I leave them to ask further for themselves.

I have seen an aged widow, and a great lady too, which did put under her tooth in less than four years a third husband and a young nobleman she had taken for lover; and did send the pair of them under the sod, not by violence or poison, but by mere enfeeblement and distillation of their substance. Yet to look at this lady, none had ever supposed her capable of aught of the sort; for indeed, before folk she did rather play the prude and poor-spirited hypocrite, actually refusing to change her shift in presence of her women for fear of their seeing her naked. But as one of her kinswomen declared, these objections

were all for her women, not for her lovers and admirers.

But come, what is the difference in merit and repute betwixt a woman which hath had several husbands in her life,—and there be plenty that have had as many as three, four or even five, and another which in her life shall have had but her husband and a lover, or two or three,—and I have actually known some women continent and faithful to that degree? As to this, I have heard a noble lady of the great world say she found naught to choose betwixt a lady who had had several husbands, and one that had had but a lover or so, along with her husband,—unless it be that the marriage veil doth cover a multitude of sins. But in point of sensuality and naughtiness, she said there was not a doit of difference. Herein do they but illustrate the Spanish proverb, which saith that *algunas mugeres son de natura de anguilas en retener, y de lobas en excoger*,—"some women are like eels to hold, and she-wolves to choose," for that the eel is mighty slippery and ill to hold, and the she-wolf doth alway choose the ugliest wolf for mate.

It befell me once at Court, as I have described elsewhere, that a lady of a sufficiently exalted rank, which had been four times married, did happen to tell me she had just been dining with her brother-in-law, and I must guess who 'twas. This she said quite simply, without any thought of roguishness; and I answered with a touch of waggery, yet laughing the while: "Am I a diviner to guess such a riddle? You have been married four times: I leave to the imagination how many brothers-in-law you may have." To this she retorted: "Nay! but you speak knavishly," and named me the particular brother-in-law.

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“Now you do talk sense,” I said then; “before you were talking all at large.”

There was in old days at Rome<sup>2</sup> a lady which had had two and twenty husbands one after other, and similarly a man which had had one and twenty wives. The pair did hereupon bethink them to make a suitable match by remarrying once more to each other. Eventually the husband did outlive the wife; and was so highly honoured and esteemed at Rome of all the people for this his noble victory, that like a successful General, he was promenaded up and down in a triumphal car, crowned with laurel and palm in hand. A splendid victory truly, and a well deserved triumph!

In the days of King Henri II., there was at his Court a certain Seigneur de Barbazan, Saint-Amand by surname, which did marry thrice—three wives one after other. His third was daughter of Madame de Monchy, governess to the Duchesse de Lorraine, who more doughty than the other two, did quite surpass them, for he died under her. Now whenas folk were mourning his loss at Court, and she in like wise was inordinately afflicted at her bereavement, M. de Montpezat, a very witty man, did rebuke all this demonstration, saying: that instead of compassionating her, they should commend and extol her to the skies for the victory she had gotten over her man, who was said to have been so vigorous a wight and so strong and well provided that he had killed his two first wives by dint of doing his devoir on them. But this lady, for that she had not succumbed in the contest but had remained victorious, should be highly praised and admired of all the Court for so glorious a success,—a victory won over so valiant and robust a champion; and that for the

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same cause herself had every reason to be proud. What a victory, and what a source of pride, pardy!

I have heard the same doctrine cited a little above maintained also by a great nobleman of France, who said: that he did find no difference 'twixt a woman that had had four or five husbands, as some have had, and a whore which hath had three or four lovers one after other. Similarly a gallant gentleman I wot of, having wedded a wife that had been three times married already, one I also know by name, a man of ready tongue and wit, did exclaim: "He hath married at last a whore from the brothel of good name." I'faith, women which do thus marry again and again be like grasping surgeons, that will not at once bind up the wounds of a poor wounded man, so as to prolong the cure and the better to be gaining all the while their bits of fees. Nay! one dame of this sort was used actually to say outright: "'Tis a poor thing to stop dead in the very middle of one's career; one is bound to finish, and go on to the end!"

I do wonder that these women which be so hot and keen to marry again, and at the same time so stricken in years, do not for their credit's sake make some use of cooling remedies and antiphlogistic potions, so as to drive out all these heated humours. Yet so far be they from any wish to use the like, as that they do employ the very opposite treatment, declaring suchlike cooling boluses would ruin their stomach. I have seen and read a little old-fashioned tract in Italian, but a silly book withal, which did undertake to give recipes against lasciviousness, and cited some two and thirty. But these be all so silly I recommend not women to use them, nor to submit themselves to any such annoying regimen. And so I have



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not thought good to copy them in here. Pliny doth adduce one, which in former days the Vestal virgins were used to employ; the Athenian dames did resort to the same remedy during the festivals of the goddess Ceres, known as the *Thesmophoria*, to cool their humours thereby and take away all hot appetite of concupiscence. 'Twas to sleep on mattresses of the leaves of a tree called the *agnus castus*. But be sure, an if during the feast they did mortify themselves in this wise, after the same was over, they did very soon pitch their mattresses to the winds.

I have seen a tree of the sort at a house in Guienne belonging to a very high-born, honourable and beautiful lady. She would oft times show the tree to strangers which came thither as a great rarity, and tell them its peculiar property. But devil take me if ever I have seen or heard tell of woman or dame that hath sent to gather one single branch, or made the smallest scrap of mattress from its leaves. Certainly not the lady that owned the said tree, who might have made what use she pleased thereof. Truly, it had been a pity an if she had, and her husband had not been best pleased; for so fair and charming a dame was she, 'twas only right nature should be allowed her way, and she hath borne to boot a noble line of offspring.



AND to speak truth, suchlike harsh, chill medicines should be left to poor nuns and prescribed to them only, which for all their fasting and mortifying of the flesh, be oft times sore assailed, poor creatures, with temptations of the flesh. An if only they had their freedom, they would be ready enough, at least some would, to take like refreshment with their more worldly sisters, and not seldom do they repent them of their repentance. This is seen with the Roman courtesans, as to one of whom I must tell a diverting tale. She was vowed to take the veil, but before her going finally to the nunnery, a former lover of hers, a gentleman of France, doth come to bid her farewell, ere she entered the cloister forever. But before leaving her, he did ask one more gratification of his passion, and she did grant the same, with these words: *Fate dunque presto; ch' adesso mi veranno cercar per far mi monaca, e menare al monasterio*,—"Do it quick then, for they be coming directly to make me a nun and carry me off to cloister." We must suppose she was fain to do it this once as a final treat, and say with the Roman poet: *Tandem hæc olim meminisse juvabit*,—" 'Twill be good to remember in future days this last delight." A strange repentance insooth and a quaint novitiate! But truly when once they be professed, at any rate the good-looking ones, (though of course there be exceptions), I do believe they live more on the bitter herb of repentance than any other bodily or spiritual sustenance.

Some however there be which do contrive a remedy for this state of things, whether by dispensation or by sheer

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license they do take for themselves. For in our lands they have no such dire treatment to fear as the Romans in old days did mete out to their Vestal virgins which had gone astray. This was verily hateful and abominable in its cruelty; but then they were pagans and abounding in horrors and cruelties. On the contrary we Christians, which do follow after the gentleness of our Lord Christ, should be tender-hearted as he was, and forgiving as he was forgiving. I would describe here in writing the fashion of their punishment; but for very horror my pen doth refuse to indite the same.

Let us now leave these poor recluses, which I do verily believe, once they be shut up in their nunneries, do endure no small hardship. So a Spanish lady one time, seeing them setting to the religious life a very fair and honourable damsel, did thus exclaim: *O tristezilla, y en que pecasteis, que tan presto vienes à penitencia, y seis metida en sepultura viva!*—"Poor creature, what so mighty sin have you done, that you be so soon brought to penitence and thus buried alive!" And seeing the nuns offering her every complaisance, compliment and welcome, she said: *que todo le hedia, hasta el encienso de la yglesia,*—"that it all stank in her nostrils, to the very incense in the church."

Now as to these vows of virginity, Heliogabalus did promulgate a law to the effect that no Roman maid, not even a Vestal virgin, was bound to perpetual virginity, saying how that the female sex was over weak for women to be bound to a pact they could never be sure of keeping. And for this reason they that have founded hospitals for the nourishing, rescuing and marrying poor girls, have done a very charitable work, no less

to enable these to taste the sweet fruit of marriage than to turn them from naughtiness. So Panurge in Rabelais, did give much wealth of his to make such marriages, and especially in the case of old and ugly women, for with such was need of more expenditure of money than for the pretty ones.

One question there is I would fain have resolved in all sincerity and without concealment of any kind by some good lady that hath made the journey,—to wit, when women be married a second time, how they be affected toward the memory of their first husband. 'Tis a general maxim hereanent, that later friendships and enmities do always make the earlier ones forgot; in like wise will a second marriage bury the thought of the first. As to this I will now give a diverting example, though from an humble source,—not that it should therefore be void of authority and to be rejected, if it be as they say, that albeit in an obscure and common quarter, yet may wisdom and good intelligence be hid there. A great lady of Poitou one day asking a peasant woman, a tenant of hers, how many husbands she had had, and how she found them, the latter, bobbing her little country curtsey, did coolly answer: "I'll tell you, Madam; I've had two husbands, praise the Lord! One was called Guillaume, he was the first; and the second was called Collas. Guillaume was a good man, easy in his circumstances, and did treat me very well; but there, God have good mercy on Collas' soul, for Collas did his duty right well by me." But she did actually say the word straight out without any glozing or disguise such as I have thrown over it. Prithee, consider how the naughty wench did pray God for the dead man which was so good a mate and so lusty,



and for what benefit, to wit that he had covered her so doughtily; but of the first, never a word of the sort. I should suppose many dames that do wed a second time and a third do the same; for after all this is their chiefest reason for marrying again, and he that doth play this game the best, is best loved. Indeed they do always imagine the second husband must need be a fierce performer,—though very oft they be sore deceived, not finding in the shop the goods they did there think to find. Or else, if there be some provision, 'tis oft so puny, wasted and worn, so slack, battered, drooping and dilapidated, they do repent them ever they invested their money in the bargain. Of this myself have seen many examples, that I had rather not adduce.

We read in Plutarch how Cleomenes, having wedded the fair Agiatis, wife of Agis, after the death of the latter, did grow fondly enamoured of the same by reason of her surpassing beauty. He did not fail to note the great sadness she lay under for her first husband's loss; and felt so great compassion for her, as that he made no grievance of the love she still bare her former husband, and the affectionate memory she did cherish of him. In fact, himself would often turn the discourse to her earlier life, asking her facts and details as to the pleasures that had erstwhile passed betwixt them twain. He had her not for long however, for she soon died, to his extreme sorrow. 'Tis a thing not a few worthy husbands do in the case of fair widows they have married.

But 'tis time now surely, methinks, to be making an end, if ever end is to be made.

Other ladies there be which declare they do much better love their second husbands than their first. "For as to

our first husbands," some of these have told me, "these we do more often than not take at the orders of our King or the Queen our mistress, or at the command of our fathers, mothers, kinsmen, or guardians, not by our own unbiassed wish. On the other hand, once widowed and thus free and emancipated, we do exercise such choice as seemeth us good, and take new mates solely for our own good will and pleasure, for delight of love and the satisfaction of our heart's desire." Of a surety there would seem to be good reason here, were it not that very oft, as the old-time proverb saith,—“Love that begins with a ring, oft ends with a halter.” So every day do we see instances and examples where women thinking to be well treated of their husbands, the which they have in some cases rescued from justice and the gibbet, from poverty and misery and the hangman, and saved alive, have been sore beaten, bullied, cruelly entreated and often done to death of the same,—a just punishment of heaven for their base ingratitude toward their former husbands, that were only too good to them, and of whom they had never a good word to say.

These were in no way like one I have heard tell of, who the first night of her marriage, when now her husband was beginning his assault, did start sobbing and sighing very sore, so that at one and the same time she was in two quite opposite states, cold and hot, winter and summer, both at once. Her husband asking her what cause she had to be so sad, and if he were not doing his devoir well, “Alas! too well, good sir!” she made answer; “but I am thinking of mine other husband, which did so earnestly pray me again and again never to marry afresh after his death, but to bear in mind and have compas-

sion on his young children. Alackaday! I see plainly I shall have the like ado with you. Woe's me! what *shall* I do? I do think, an if he can see me from the place he now is in, he will be cursing me finely." What an idea, never to have thought on this afore, nor to have felt remorse but when 'twas all too late! But the husband did soon appease her, and expel this fancy by the best method possible; then next morning throwing wide the chamber window, he did cast forth all memory of the former husband. For is there not an old proverb which saith, "A woman that burieth one husband, will think little of burying another," and another, "There's more grimace than grief, when a woman loseth her husband."

I knew another widow, a great lady, which was quite the opposite of the last, and did not weep one whit the first night. For then, and the second to boot, she did go so lustily to work with her second husband as that they did break down and burst the bedstead, and this albeit she had a kind of cancer on one breast. Yet notwithstanding her affliction, she did miss never a point of amorous delight; and often afterward would divert him with tales of the folly and ineptitude of her former mate. And truly, by what I have heard sundry of either sex tell me, the very last thing a second husband doth desire of his wife is to be entertained with the merits and worth of her first, as though jealous of the poor departed wight, who would like naught so well as to return to earth again; but as for abuse of him, as much of that as ever you please! Natheless there be not a few that will ask their wives about their former lords, as did Cleomenes; but this they do, as feeling themselves to be strong and vigorous; and so delighting to institute comparisons, do

cross-question them concerning the other's sturdiness and vigour in these sweet encounters. In like wise have I heard of some which to put their bedfellows in better case, do lead them to think their former mates were prentice hands compared with them, a device that doth oft times answer their purpose well. Others again will say just the opposite, and declare their first husbands were perfect giants, so as to spur on their new mates to work like very pack mules.

## 11.

**W**IDOWS of the sort just described would be in good case in the island of Chios, the fairest, sweetest and most pleasant of the Levant, formerly possessed by the Genoese, but now for five and thirty years usurped by the Turks,—a crying shame and loss for Christendom. Now in this isle, as I am informed of sundry Genoese traders, 'tis the custom that every woman desiring to continue a widow, without any intent to marry again, is constrained to pay to the Seigneurie of the island a certain fixed sum of money, which they call *argomoniatiquo*, which is the same as saying (with all respect to the ladies), *an idle spot is useless*. So likewise at Sparta, as Plutarch saith in his *Life of Lysander*, was a fine established by law against such as would not marry, or did marry over late, or ill. To return to Scio (Chios), I have enquired of certain natives of that island, what might be the aim and object of the said custom, which told me 'twas to the end the isle might always be well peopled. I can vouch for this, that our land of France will surely never be left desert or infertile



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by fault of our widows' not marrying again; for I ween there be more which do re-marry than not, and will pay never a doit of tribute for idle and useless females. And if not by marriage, at any rate in other ways, these Chiotess do make that same organ work and fructify, as I will presently show. 'Tis well too for our maids of France they need not to pay the tax their sisters of Chios be liable to; for these, whether in country or town, if they do come to lose their maidenhead before marriage, and be fain after to continue the trade, be bound to pay once for all a ducat (and surely 'tis a good bargain to compound for all their life after at this price) to the Captain of the Night Watch, so as they may pursue their business as they please, without let or hindrance. And herein doth lie the chiefest and most certain profit this worthy Captain doth come by in his office.

These dames and damsels of this Isle be much different from those of olden days in the same land, which, by what Plutarch saith in his *Opuscula*, were so chaste for seven hundred years, that never a case was remembered where a married woman had done adultery, or a maid had been deflowered unwed. A miracle! 'twill be said, a mythic tale worthy of old Homer! At any rate be sure they be much other nowadays!

Never was a time when the Greeks had not always some device or other making for wantonness. So in old times we read of a custom in the isle of Cyprus, which 'tis said the kindly goddess Venus, the patroness of that land, did introduce. This was that the maids of that island should go forth and wander along the banks, shores and cliffs of the sea, for to earn their marriage portions by the generous giving of their bodies to mariners, sailors and

seafarers along that coast. These would put in to shore on purpose, very often indeed turning aside from their straight course by compass to land there; and so taking their pleasant refreshment with them, would pay handsomely, and presently hie them away again to sea, for their part only too sorry to leave such good entertainment behind. Thus would these fair maids win their marriage dowers, some more, some less, some high, some low, some grand, some lowly, according to the beauty, gifts and carnal attractions of each damsel.

Nowadays 'tis different. No maids in any Christian nation do thus go wandering forth, to expose them to wind and rain, cold and heat, sun and moon, and so win their dower, for that the task is too laborious for their delicate and tender skins and white complexions. Rather do they have their lovers come to them under rich pavilions and gorgeous hangings, and do there draw their amorous profit from their paramours, without ever a tax to pay. I speak not now of the courtesans of Rome, who do pay tax, but of women of higher place than they. In fact for the most part for such damsels their fathers, mothers and brothers, be not at much pains to gather money for their portion on marriage; but on the contrary many of them be found able to give handsomely to their kinsfolk, and advance the same in goods and offices, ranks and dignities, as myself have seen in many instances.

For this cause did Lycurgus ordain in his Laws that virgins should be wedded without money dowry, to the end men might marry them for their merits, and not from greed. But, what kind of virtue was it? Why! on their solemn feast-days the Spartan maids were used to sing

and dance in public stark naked with the lads, and even wrestle in the open market-place,—the which however was done in all honesty and good faith, so History saith. But what sort of honesty and purity was this, we may well ask, to look on at these pretty maids so performing publicly? Honesty was it never a whit, but pleasure in the sight of them, and especially of their bodily movements and dancing postures, and above all in their wrestling; and chiefest of all when they came to fall one atop of the other, as they say in Latin, *illa sub, ille super; ille sub et illa super*,—"she underneath, he atop; he underneath, she atop." You will never persuade me, 'twas all honesty and purity herein with these Spartan maidens. I ween there is never chastity so chaste that would not have been shaken thereby, or that, so making in public and by day these feint assaults, they did not presently in privacy and by night and on assignation proceed to greater combats and night-attacks. And no doubt all this might well be done, seeing how the said Lycurgus did suffer such men as were handsome and well grown to borrow other citizens' wives to sow seed therein as in a good and fruitful soil. So was it in no wise blameworthy for an old outwearied husband to lend his young and beautiful wife to some gallant youth he did choose therefor. Nay! the lawgiver did pronounce it permissible for the wife herself to choose for to help her procreation the next kinsman of her husband, then an if he pleased her fancy, to couple with him, to the end the children they might engender should at least be of the blood and race of the husband. Indeed there is some sense in the practice, and had not the Jews likewise the same law of license betwixt sister-in-law and brother-in-law? On the other hand our

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Christian law hath reformed all this, albeit our Holy Father hath in divers cases granted dispensations founded on divers reasons. In Spain 'tis a practice much adopted, but never without dispensation.

Well! to say something more, and as soberly as we may, of some other sorts of widows,—and then an end.

One sort there is, widows which do absolutely refuse to marry again, hating wedlock like the plague. So one, a lady of a great house and a witty woman withal, when that I asked her if she were not minded to make her vow once again to the god Hymen, did reply: “Tell me this, by'r lady; suppose a galley-slave or captive to have tugged years long at the oar, tied to the chain, and at last to have got back his freedom, would he not be a fool and a very imbecile, an if he did not hie him away with a good heart, determined never more to be subject to the orders of a savage corsair? So I, after being in slavery to an husband, an if I should take a fresh master, what should I deserve to get, prithee, since without resorting to that extreme, and with no risk at all, I can have the best of good times?” Another great lady, and a kinswoman of mine own, on my asking her if she had no wish to wed again, replied: “Never a bit, coz, but only to bed again,” playing on the words *wed* and *bed*, and signifying she would be glad enough to give herself some treat, but without intervention of any second husband,—according to the old proverb which saith, “A safer fling unwed than wed.” Another saying hath it, that women be always good hostesses, in love as elsewhere; and a right saying 'tis, for they be mistresses of the situation, and queens wherever they be,—that is the pretty ones be so.

I have heard tell of another, which was asked of a



gentleman which was fain to try his ground as a suitor for her hand, an if she would not like an husband. "Nay! sir," she answered, "never talk to me of an husband, I'll have no more of them; but for a lover, I'm not so sure."—"Then, Madame, prithee, let me be that lover, since husband I may not be." Her reply was, "Court me well, and persevere; mayhap you will succeed."

A fair and honourable widow lady, of some thirty summers, one day wishing to break a jest with an honourable gentleman, or to tell truth, to provoke him to love-making, and having as she was about to mount her horse caught the front of her mantle on something and torn it somewhat in detaching it, taking it up said to him: "Look you, what you have done, so and so" (accosting him by his name); "you have ripped my front."

"I should be right sorry to hurt it, Madam; 'tis too sweet and pretty for that."

"Why! what know you of it?" she replied; "you have never seen it."

"What! can you deny," retorted the other, "that I have seen it an hundred times over, when you were a little lassie?"

"Ah! but," said she, "I was then but a stripling, and knew not yet what was what."

"Still, I suppose 'tis yet in the same place as of old, and hath not changed position. I ween I could even now find it in the same spot."

"Oh, yes! 'tis there still, albeit mine husband hath rolled it and turned it about, more than ever did Diogenes with his tub."

"Yes! and nowadays how doth it do without movement?"

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“’Tis for all the world like a clock that is left unwound.”

“Then take you heed, lest that befall you that doth happen to clocks when they be not wound up, and continue so for long; their springs do rust by lapse of time, and they be good for naught after.”

“’Tis not a fair comparison,” said she, “for that the springs of the clock you mean be not liable to rust at all, but keep in good order, wound or unwound, always ready to be set a-going at any time.”

“Please God,” cried the gentleman, “whenas the time for winding come, I might be the watchmaker to wind it up!”

“Well, well!” returned the lady, “when that day and festive hour shall arrive, we will not be idle, but will do a right good day’s work. So God guard from ill him I love not as well as you.”

After this keen and heart pricking interchange of wit, the lady did mount her horse, after kissing the gentleman with much good-will, adding as she rode away, “Good-bye, till we meet again, and enjoy our little treat!”

But alas! as ill fate would have it, the fair lady did die within six weeks whereat her lover did well nigh die of chagrin. For these enticing words, with others she had said afore, had so heartened him with good hope that he was assured of her conquest, as indeed she was ready enough to be his. A malison on her untimely end, for verily she was one of the best and fairest dames you could see anywhere, and well worth a venial fault to possess,—or even a mortal sin!

Another fair young widow was asked by an honourable gentleman if she did keep Lent, and abstain from eating

meat, as folks do then. "No!" she said, I do not."—"So I have observed," returned the gentleman; "I have noted you made no scruple, but did eat meat at that season just as at any other, both raw and cooked."—"That was at the time mine husband was alive; now I am a widow, I have reformed and regulated my living more seemly."—"Nay! beware," then said the other, "of fasting so strictly, for it doth readily happen to such as go fasting and an-hungred, that anon, when the desire of meat cometh on them, they do find their vessels so narrow and contracted, as that they do thereby suffer much incommodity."—"Nay! that vessel of my body," said the lady, "that you mean, is by no means so narrow or hunger-pinched, but that, when mine appetite shall revive, I may not afford it good and sufficient refreshment."

I knew another great lady, which all through her unmarried and married life was in all men's mouths by reason of her exceeding stoutness. Afterward she came to lose her husband, and did mourn him with so extreme a sorrow that she grew as dry as wood.<sup>1</sup> Yet did she never cease to indulge her in the joys of former days, even going so far as to borrow the aid of a certain Secretary she had, and of other such to boot, and even of her cook, so 'twas reported. For all that, she did not win back her flesh, albeit the said cook, who was all fat and greasy, ought surely, I ween, to have made her fat. So she went on, taking now one, now another of her serving-men, all the while playing the part of the most prudish and virtuous dame in all the Court, with pious phrases ever on her lips, and naught but scandal against all other women, and never a word of good for any of them. Of like sort was that noble woman of Dauphiné, in the *Cent*

*Nouvelles* of the Queen of Navarre, which was found lying flat on the grass with her groom or muleteer by a certain gentleman, that was ready to die of love for her but this sight did quick cure his love sickness for him.

I have heard speak of a very beautiful woman at Naples, which had the repute of going in like manner with a Moor, the ugliest fellow in the world, who was her slave and groom, but something made her love him.

## 12.



HAVE read in an old Romance, *Jehan de Saintré*, printed in black letter, how the late King John of France did rear the hero Jehan as his page. Now by custom of former days, great folk were used to send their pages to carry messages, as is done likewise to-day. But then they were wont to go everywhere, and up and down the countryside, a-horseback; I have even heard our fathers say they were not seldom sent on minor embassies, for by despatching a page and horse and a broad piece, the thing was done and so much expense well spared. This same little Jehan de Saintré (for so he did long continue to be called) was very much loved of his master the King, for that he was full of wit and intelligence, and was often sent to carry trifling messages to his sister, who was at the time a widow,—though the book saith not whose widow. This great lady did fall enamoured of the lad, after he had been several times on errands to her; so one day, finding a good opportunity and no one nigh, she did question him, asking him an if he did not love some lady or other at Court, and which of them all liked him best.



This is a way a great many ladies have, whenas they be fain to score the first point and deliver their first attack on one they fancy, as myself have seen done. Well! little Jehan de Saintr , who had never so much as dreamed of love, told her, "No! not yet," going on to describe several Court ladies, and what he thought of them. Then did she hold forth to him on the beauties and delights of love, but he only answered, "Nay! I care less than ever for't." For in those old days, even as to-day, some of our greatest ladies were slaves to love and much subject to detraction; for indeed folk so adroit as they have grown since, and 'twas only the cleverest that had the good fortune to impose on their husbands and pass as good women by virtue of their hypocrisies and little wiles. The lady then, seeing the lad to be well-favoured, goes on to tell him how she would give him a mistress that would love him well, provided he was a true lover to her, making him promise under pain of instant shame and disgrace, that above all he should be sure and secret. Eventually she did make her avowal to him, and tell him herself would fain be his lady and darling,—for in those days the word *mistress* was not as yet in vogue. At this the young page was sore astonished, thinking she did but make a mock of him, or wished to trap him and get him a whipping.

However she did very soon show so many unequivocal signs of fire and heat of love and such tender familiarities, as that he perceived 'twas no mockery; while she kept on telling him she would train and form him and make him a great man. The end was their loves and mutual joys did last a long while, during his pagehood and after he was no more a page, till at the last he had to depart

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on a distant journey,—when she did change him for a great, fat Abbé. This is the tale we find in the *Nouvelles du monde aventureux*, writ by a gentleman of the chamber to the Queen of Navarre, wherein we see the Abbé put an affront on the said Jehan de Saintré, that was so brave and valiant; yet did he in no long while pay the worthy Abbé back in good coin and three times over. 'Tis an excellent Tale, and cometh from the book I have named.

Here we see how 'tis not only of to-day that fair ladies do love pages, above all when they be gay and speckled like partridges. And verily, what creatures women be!—that be ready enough to have lovers galore, but husbands not! This they do for the love of freedom, which is indeed a noble thing. For they think, when once they be out of their husband's rule, they are in Paradise, having their fine dower and spending it themselves, managing all the household, and handling the coin. All goeth through their hands; and instead of being servants, they be now mistresses, and do make free choice of their pleasures, and such as do best minister to the same.

Others again there be, which do surely hate the notion of making a second marriage, from distaste to lose their rank and dignity, their goods, riches and honours, their soft and luxurious living, and for this cause do restrain their passions. So have I known and heard speak of not a few great dames and Princesses, which from mere dread of their failing to find again the grandeurs of their first match, and so losing rank, would never marry again. Not that they did cease therefor one whit to follow after love and turn the same to their joy and delight,—yet all the while never losing their rank and dignity, their

stools of state and honourable seats in Queens' chambers and elsewhere. Lucky women, to enjoy their grandeur and mount high, yet abase them low, at one and the same time! But to say a word of reproach or remonstrance to them, never dream no such thing! Else no end would there be of anger and annoyance, denials and protestations, contradiction and revenge.

I have heard a tale told of a widow lady, and indeed I knew her myself, which had long enjoyed the love of an honourable gentleman, under pretext she would marry him; but he did in no wise make himself obtrusive. A great Princess, the lady's mistress, was for reproaching her for her conduct. But she, wily and corrupt, did answer her: "Nay! Madam, but should it be denied us to love with an honourable love? surely that were too cruel." Only God knoweth, this love she called honourable, was really a most lecherous passion. And verily all loves be so; they be born all pure, chaste and honourable, but anon do lose their maidenhead, so to speak, and by magic influence of some philosopher's stone, be transformed into base metal, and grow dishonourable and lecherous.

The late M. de Bussy, who was one of the wittiest talkers of his time, and no less pleasing as a story-teller, one day at Court seeing a great lady, a widow, and of ripe years, who did still persist in her amorous doings, did exclaim: "What! doth this hackney yet frequent the stallion?" The word was repeated to the lady, which did vow mortal hate against the offender. On M. de Bussy's learning this, "Well, well!" he said, "I know how to make my peace, and put this all right. Prithee, go tell her I said not so, but that this is what I really said,

‘Doth this *filly*<sup>1</sup> yet go to be mounted? For sure I am she is not wroth because I take her for a light o’ love, but for an old woman; and when she hears I called her filly, that is to say a young mare, she will suppose I do still esteem her a young woman.’” And so it was; for the lady, on hearing this change and improvement in the wording, did relax her anger and made it up with M. de Bussy; whereat we did all have a good laugh. Yet for all she might do, she was always deemed an old, half-foundered jade, that aged as she was, still went whinnying after the male.

This last was quite unlike another lady I have also heard tell of, who having been a merry wench in her earlier days, but getting well on in years, did set her to serve God with fast and prayer. An honourable gentleman remonstrating and asking her wherefore she did make such long vigils at Church and such severe fasts at table, and if it were not to vanquish and deaden the stings of the flesh, “Alas!” said she, “these be all over and done with for me.” These words she did pronounce as piteously as ever spake Milo of Croton, that strong and stalwart wrestler of old, (I have told the tale elsewhere, methinks), who having one day gone down into the arena, or wrestlers’ ring, but only for to view the game, for he was now grown very old, one of the band coming up to him did ask, an if he would not try yet a fall of the old sort. But he, baring his arms and right sadly turning back his sleeves, said only, gazing the while at his muscles and sinews: “Alas! they be dead now.”

Another like incident did happen to a gentleman I wot of, similar to the tale I have just told of M. de Bussy.



Coming to Court, after an absence of six months, he there beheld a lady which was used to attend the academy, lately introduced at Court by the late King. "Why!" saith he, "doth the academy then still exist? I was told it had been abolished."—"Can you doubt," a courtier answered him, "her attendance? Why! her master is teaching her philosophy, which doth speak and treat of perpetual motion." And in good sooth, for all the beating of brains these same philosophers do undergo, to discover perpetual motion, yet is there none more surely so than the motion Venus doth teach in *her* school.

A lady of the great world did give even a better answer of another, whose beauty they were extolling highly, only that her eyes did ever remain motionless, she never turning the same one way or the other. "We must suppose," she said, "all her care doth go to move other portions of her body, and so hath she none to spare for her eyes."

However, an if I would put down in writing all the witty words and good stories I know, to fill out my matter, I should never get me done. And so, seeing I have other subjects to attack, I will desist, and finish with this saying of Boccaccio, already cited above, namely, that women, maids, wives and widows alike, at least the most part of them, be one and all inclined to love. I have no thought to speak of common folk, whether in country or in town, for such was never mine intention in writing, but only of well-born persons, in whose service my pen is aye ready to run nimbly. But for mine own part, if I were asked my true opinion, I should say emphatically there is naught like married women, all risk and peril on their husbands' side apart, for to win good enjoyment

of love withal, and to taste quick the very essence of its delights. The fact is their husbands do heat them so, they be like a furnace, continually poked and stirred, that asks naught but fuel, water and wood or charcoal to keep up its heat for ever. And truly he that would have a good light, must always be putting more oil in the lamp. At the same time let him beware of a foul stroke, and those ambushes of jealous husbands wherein the wiliest be oft times caught!

Yet is a man bound to go as circumspectly as he may, and as boldly to boot, and do like the great King Henri, who was much devoted to love, but at the same time exceeding respectful toward ladies, and discreet, and for these reasons much loved and well received of them. Now whenever it fell out that this monarch was changing night quarters and going to sleep in the bed of a new mistress, which expecting him, he would never go thither (as I learn on very good authority) but by the secret galleries of Saint-Germain, Blois or Fontainebleau, and the little stealthy back-stairs, recesses and garrets of his castles. First went his favourite valet of the chamber, Griffon by name, which did carry his boar-spear before him along with the torch, and the King next, his great cloak held before his face or else his night-gown, and his sword under his arm. Presently, being to bed with the lady, he would aye have his spear and sword put by the bed's-head, the door well shut, and Griffon guarding it, watching and sleeping by turns. Now I leave it to you, an if a great King did give such heed to his safety (for indeed there have been some caught, both kings and great princes,—for instance the Duc de Fleurance Alexandre in our day), what smaller folks should do, following the

example of this powerful monarch. Yet there are to be found proud souls which do disdain all precaution; and of a truth they be often trapped for their pains.

I have heard a tale related of King Francis, how having a fair lady as mistress, a connection that had long subsisted betwixt them, and going one day unexpectedly to see the said lady, and to sleep with her at an unusual hour, 'gan knock loudly on the door, as he had both right and might to do, being the master. She, who was at the moment in company of the *Sieur de Bonnavet*, durst not give the reply usual with the Roman courtesans under like circumstances, *Non si puo, la signora è accompagnata*,—"You cannot come in; Madam has company with her." In this case the only thing to do was to devise quick where her gallant could be most securely hid. By good luck 'twas summer time, so they had put an heap of branches and leaves in the fire-place, as the custom is in France. Accordingly she did counsel and advise him to make at once for the fire-place, and there hide him among the leafage, all in his shirt as he was,—and 'twas a fortunate thing for him it was not winter. After the King had done his business with the lady, he was fain to make water; so getting up from the bed, he went to the fire-place to do so, for lack of other convenience. And so sore did he want to, that he did drown the poor lover worse than if a bucket of water had been emptied over him, for he did water him thoroughly, as with a garden watering-pot, all round and about, and even over the face, eyes, nose, mouth and everywhere; albeit by tight shut lips he may have escaped all but a drop or so in his chops. I leave you to fancy what a sorry state the poor gentleman was in, for he durst not move, and what a

picture of patience and grim endurance he did present! The King having done, withdrew, and bidding his mistress farewell, left the chamber. The lady had the door immediately shut behind him, and calling her lover into her, did warm the poor man, giving him a clean shift to put on. Nor was it without some fun and laughter, after the fright they had had; for an if he had been discovered, both he and she had been in very serious peril.

'Twas the same lady, which being deep in love with this M. de Bonnavet, and desiring to convince the King of the contrary, for that he had conceived some touch of jealousy on the subject, would say thus to him: "Oh! but he's diverting, that Sieur de Bonnavet, who thinks himself so handsome! and the more I tell him he is a pretty fellow, the more he doth believe it. 'Tis my great pastime, making fun of the man, for he's really witty and ready-tongued, and no one can help laughing in his company, such clever retorts doth he make." By these words she was for persuading the King that her common discourse with Bonnavet had naught to do with love and alliance, or playing his Majesty false in any wise. How many fair dames there be which do practise the like wiles, and to cloak the intrigues they are pursuing with some lover, do speak ill of him, and make fun of him before the world, though in private they soon drop this fine pretense; and this is what they call cunning and contrivance in love.

I knew a very great lady, who one day seeing her daughter, which was one of the fairest of women, grieving for the love of a certain gentleman, with whom her brother was sore angered, did say this to her amongst other things: "Nay! my child, never love that man. His



manners and form be so bad, and he's such an ugly fellow. He's for all the world like a village pastry cook!" At this the daughter burst out a-laughing, making merry at his expense and applauding her mother's description, allowing his likeness to a pastry-cook, red cap and all. For all that, she had her way; but some while after, in another six months that is, she did leave him for another man.

I have known not a few ladies which had no words bad enough to cast at women that loved inferiors,—their secretaries, serving-men and the like low-born persons, declaring publicly they did loathe such intrigues worse than poison. Yet would these very same ladies be giving themselves up to these base pleasures as much as any. Such be the cunning ways of women; before the world they do show fierce indignation against these offenders, and do threaten and abuse them; but all the while behind backs they do readily enough indulge the same vice themselves. So full of wiles are they! for as the Spanish proverb saith, *Mucho sabe la zorra; mas sabe mas la dama enamorada*,—"The fox knoweth much, but a woman in love knoweth more."

## 13.



HOWEVER, for all this fair lady of the tale told above did to lull King Francis' anxiety, yet did she not drive forth every grain of suspicion from out his head, as I have reason to know. I do remember me how once, making a visit to Chambord to see the castle, an old porter that was there, who had been body servant to King Francis, did

receive me very obligingly. For in his earlier days he had known some of my people both at Court and in the field, and was of his own wish anxious to show me everything. So having led me to the King's bed-chamber, he did show me a phrase of writing by the side of the window on the left hand. "Look, Sir!" he cried, "read yonder words. If you have never seen the hand-writing of the King, mine old master, there it is." And reading it, we found this phrase, "*Toute femme varie*," writ there in large letters. I had with me a very honourable and very able gentleman of Périgord, my friend, by name M. des Roches, to whom I turned and said quickly: "'Tis to be supposed, some of the ladies he did love best, and of whose fidelity he was most assured, had been found of him to *vary* and play him false. Doubtless he had discovered some change in them that was scarce to his liking, and so, in despite, did write these words." The porter overhearing us, put in: "Why! surely, surely! make no mistake, for of all the fair dames I have seen and known, never a one but did cry off on a false scent worse than ever his hunting pack did in chasing the stag; yet 'twas with a very subdued voice, for an if he had noted it, he would have brought 'em to the scent again pretty smartly."

They were, 'twould seem, of those women, which can never be content with either their husbands or their lovers, Kings though they be, and Princes and great Lords; but must be ever chopping and changing. Such this good King had found them by experience to be, having himself first debauched the same and taken them from the charge of their husbands or their mothers, tempting them from their maiden or widowed estate.

I have both known and heard speak of a lady, so fondly loved of her Prince, as that for the mighty affection he bare her, he did plunge her to the neck in all sorts of favours, benefits and honours, and never another woman was to be compared with her for good fortune. Natheless was she so enamoured of a certain Lord, she would never quit him. Then whenas he would remonstrate and declare to her how the Prince would ruin both of them, "Nay! 'tis all one," she would answer; "an if you leave me, I shall ruin myself, for to ruin you along with me. I had rather be called your concubine than this Prince's mistress." Here you have woman's caprice surely, and wanton naughtiness to boot! Another very great lady I have known, a widow, did much the same; for albeit she was all but adored of a very great nobleman, yet must she needs have sundry other humbler lovers, so as never to lose an hour of her time or ever be idle. For indeed one man only cannot be always at work and afford enough in these matters; and the rule of love is this, that a passionate woman is not for one stated time, nor yet for one stated person alone, nor will confine her to one passion,—reminding me of that dame in the *Cent Nouvelles* of the Queen of Navarre, which had three lovers all at once, and was so clever she did contrive to manage them all three most adroitly.

The beautiful Agnes Sorel, the adored mistress of King Charles VII., was suspected by him of having borne a daughter that he thought not to be his, nor was he ever able to recognize her. And indeed, like mother, like daughter, was the word, as our Chroniclers do all agree. The same again did Anne Boleyn, wife of King Henry VIII. of England, whom he did behead for not being

content with him, but giving herself to adultery. Yet had he chose her for her beauty, and did adore her fondly.

I knew another lady which had been loved by a very honourable gentleman, but after some while left by him; and one day it happened that these twain fell to discussing their former loves. The gentleman, who was for posing as a dashing blade, cried, "Ha! ha! and think you, you were my only mistress in those days? You will be much surprised to hear, I had two others all the while, would you not?" To this she answered on the instant, "You would be yet more surprised, would you not? to learn you were anything but mine only lover then, for I had actually three beside you to fall back on." Thus you see how a good ship will always have two or three anchors for to ensure its safety thoroughly.

To conclude,—love is all in all for women, and so it should be! I will only add how once I found in the tablets of a very fair and honourable lady which did stammer a little Spanish, but did understand the same language well enough, this little maxim writ with her own hand, for I did recognize it quite easily: *Hembra o dama sin companero, esperanza sin trabajo, y navio sin timon; nunca pueden hazer cost que sea buena*,—"Man or woman without companion, hope without work, or ship without rudder, will never do aught good for much." 'Tis a saying equally true for wife, widow and maid; neither one nor the other can do aught good without the company of a man, while the hope a lover hath of winning them is not by itself near so like to gain them over readily as with something of pains and hard work added, and some strife and struggle. Yet doth not either wife or widow give so much as a maid must, for 'tis allowed of all to be an



easier and simpler thing to conquer and bring under one that hath already been conquered, subdued and overthrown, than one that hath never yet been vanquished,—and that far less toil and pains is spent in travelling a road already well worn and beaten than one that hath never been made and traced out,—and for the truth of these two instances I do refer me to travellers and men of war. And so it is with maids; indeed there be even some so capricious as that they have always refused to marry, choosing rather to live ever in maidenly estate. But an if you ask them the reason, “ ’Tis so, because my humour is to have it so,” they declare. Cybelé, Juno, Venus, Thetis, Ceres and other heavenly goddesses, did all scorn this name of virgin,—excepting only Pallas, which did spring from her father Jupiter’s brain, hereby showing that virginity is naught but a notion conceived in the brain. So, ask our maids, which will never marry, or an if they do, do so as late as ever they can, and at an over ripe age, why they marry not, “ ’Tis because I do not wish,” they say; “such is my humour and my notion.”

Several such we have seen at the Court of our Princes in the days of King Francis. The Queen Regent had a very fair and noble maid of honour, named Poupincourt, which did never marry, but died a maid at the age of sixty, as chaste as when she was born, for she was most discreet. La Brelandière again died a maid and virgin at the ripe age of eighty, the same which was governess of Madame d’Angoulême as a girl.

I knew another maid of honour of very great and exalted family, and at the time seventy years of age, which would never marry,—albeit she was no wise averse to

love without marriage. Some that would fain excuse her for that she would not marry, used to aver she was meet to be no husband's wife, seeing she had no affair at all. God knoweth the truth! but at any rate she did find a good enough one to have good fun elsewhere withal. A pretty excuse truly!

Mademoiselle de Charansonnet, of Savoy, died at Tours lately, a maid, and was interred with her hat and her white virginal robe, very solemnly, with much pomp, stateliness and good company, at the age of forty-five or over. Nor must we doubt in her case, 'twas any defect which stood in the way, for she was one of the fairest, most honourable and most discreet ladies of the Court, and myself have known her to refuse very excellent and very high-born suitors.

Mine own sister, Mademoiselle de Bourdeille, which is at Court maid of honour of the present Queen, hath in like wise refused very excellent offers, and hath never consented to marry, nor never will. So firm resolved is she and obstinate to live and die a maid, no matter to what age she may attain; and indeed so far she hath kept steady to her purpose, and is already well advanced in years.

Mademoiselle de Certan, another of the Queen's maids of honour, is of the same humour, as also Mademoiselle de Surgières, the most learned lady of the Court, and therefore known as *Minerva*,—and not a few others.

The Infanta of Portugal, daughter of the late Queen Eleanor, I have seen of the same resolved mind; and she did die a maid and virgin at the age of sixty or over. This was sure from no want of high birth, for she was well born in every way, nor of wealth, for she had plenty,

and above all in France, where General Gourgues did manage her affairs to much advantage, nor yet of natural gifts, for I did see her at Lisbon, at the age of five and forty, a very handsome and charming woman, of good and graceful appearance, gentle, agreeable, and well deserving an husband her match in all things, in courtesy and the qualities we French do most possess. I can affirm this, from having had the honour of speaking with this Princess often and familiarly.

The late Grand Prior of Lorraine, when he did bring his galleys from East to West of the Mediterranean Sea on his voyage to Scotland, in the time of the minority of King Francis II., passing by Lisbon and tarrying there some days, did visit and see her every day. She did receive him most courteously and took great delight in his company, loading him with fine presents. Amongst others, she gave him a chain to suspend his cross withal, all of diamonds and rubies and great pearls, well and richly worked; and it might be worth from four to five thousand crowns, going thrice round his neck. I think it might well be worth that sum, for he could always pawn it for three thousand crowns, as he did one time in London, when we were on our way back from Scotland. But no sooner was he returned to France than he did send to get it out again, for he did love it for the sake of the lady, with whom he was no little captivated and taken. And I do believe she was no less fond of him, and would willingly have unloosed her maiden knot for him,—that is by way of marriage, for she was a most discreet and virtuous Princess. I will say more, and that is, that but for the early troubles that did arise in France, into the which his brothers did draw him and kept him engaged

therein, he would himself have brought his galleys back and returned the same road, for to visit this Princess again and speak of wedlock with her. And I ween he would in that case have hardly been shown the door, for he was of as good an house as she, and descended of great Kings no less than she, and above all was one of the handsomest, most agreeable, honourable and best Princes of Christendom. Now for his brothers, in particular the two eldest, for these were the oracles of the rest and captains of the ship, I did one day behold them and him conversing of the matter, the Cardinal telling them of his voyage and the pleasures and favours he had received at Lisbon. They were much in favour of his making the voyage once more and going back thither again, advising him to pursue his advantage in that quarter, as the Pope would at once have given him dispensation of his religious orders. And but for those accursed troubles I have spoke of, he would have gone, and in mine opinion the emprise had turned out to his honour and satisfaction. The said Princess did like him well, and spake to me of him very fondly, asking me as to his death,—quite like a woman in love, a thing easily enough perceived in such circumstances by a man of a little penetration.

I have heard yet another reason alleged by a very clever person, I say not whether maid or wife,—and she had mayhap had experience of the truth thereof,—why some women be so slow to marry. They declare this tardiness cometh *propter mollitiem*, “by reason of luxuriousness.” Now this word *mollities* doth mean, they be so luxurious, that is to say so much lovers of their own selves and so careful to have tender delight and pleasure by themselves and in themselves, or mayhap with their



bosom friends, after the Lesbian fashion, and do find such gratification in female society alone, as that they be convinced and firmly persuaded that with men they would never win such satisfaction. Wherefore they be content to go without these altogether in their joys and toothsome pleasures, without ever a thought of masculine acquaintance or marriage.

Maids and virgins would seem in old days at Rome to have been highly honoured and privileged, so much so that the law had no jurisdiction over them to sentence them to death. Hence the story we read of a Roman Senator in the time of the Triumvirate, which was condemned to die among other victims of the Proscription, and not he alone, but all the offspring of his loins. So when a daughter of his house did appear on the scaffold, a very fair and lovely girl, but of unripe years and yet virgin, 'twas needful for the executioner to deflower her himself and take her maidenhead on the scaffold, and only then when she was so polluted, could he ply his knife upon her. The Emperor Tiberius did delight in having fair virgins thus publicly deflowered, and then put to death,—a right villainous piece of cruelty, pardy!

The Vestal Virgins in like manner were greatly honoured and respected, no less for their virginity than for their religious character; for indeed, an if they did show any the smallest frailty of bodily purity, they were an hundred times more rigorously punished than when they had failed to take good heed of the sacred fire, and were buried alive under the most pitiful and terrible circumstances. 'Tis writ of one Albinus, a Roman gentleman, that having met outside Rome some Vestals that were going somewhither a-foot, he did command his wife and

children to descend from her chariot, to set them in it and so complete their journey. Moreover they had such weight and authority, as that very often they were trusted as umpires to make peace betwixt the Roman people and the Knights, when troubles did sometimes arise affecting the two orders. The Emperor Theodosius did expel them from Rome under advice of the Christians; but in opposition to the said Emperor the Romans did presently depute one Symmachus, to beseech him to restore them again, with all their wealth, incomings and privileges as before. These were exceedingly great, and indeed every day they were used to distribute so great a store of alms, as that neither native Roman nor stranger, coming or going, was ever suffered to ask an alms, so copious was their pious charity toward all poor folk. Yet would Theodosius never agree to bring them back again.

They were named Vestals from the Latin word *vesta*, signifying fire, the which may well turn and twist, shoot and sparkle, yet doth it never cast seed, nor receive the same,—and so 'tis with a virgin. They were bound so to remain virgins for thirty years, after which they might marry; but few of them were fortunate in so leaving their first estate, just like our own nuns which have cast off the veil and quitted the religious habit. They kept much state and went very sumptuously dressed,—of all which the poet Prudentius doth give a pleasing description, being apparently much in the condition of our present Lady Canonesses of Mons in Hainault and Réaumont in Lorraine, which be permitted to marry after. Moreover this same Prudentius doth greatly blame them because they were used to go abroad in the city in most magnificent coaches, correspondingly attired, and to the Amphi-

theatres to see the games of the Gladiators and combats to the death betwixt men and men, and men and wild beasts, as though finding much delight in seeing folk thus kill each other and shed blood. Wherefore he doth pray the Emperor to abolish these sanguinary contests and pitiful spectacles altogether. The Vestals at any rate should never behold suchlike barbarous sports; though indeed they might say for their part: "For lack of other more agreeable sports, the which other women do see and practise, we must needs content us with these."

As for the estate of widows in many cases, there be many which do love just as soberly as these Vestals, and myself have known several such; but others again would far fainer take their joy in secret with men, and in the fullness of complete liberty, rather than subject to them in the bonds of marriage. For this reason, when we do see women long preserve their widowhood, 'tis best not over much to praise them as we might be inclined to do, till we do know their mode of life, and then only, according to what we have learned thereof, either to extol them most highly or scorn them. For a woman, when she is fain to unbend her severity, as the phrase is, is terribly wily, and will bring her man to a pretty market, an if he take not good heed. And being so full of guile, she doth well understand how to bewitch and bedazzle the eyes and wits of men in such wise they can scarce possibly recognize the real life they lead. For such or such an one they will mistake for a perfect prude and model of virtue, which all the while is a downright harlot, but doth play her game so cunningly and furtively none can ever discover aught.

I have known a great Lady in my time, which did

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remain a widow more than forty years, so acting all the while as to be esteemed the most respectable woman in country or Court, yet was she *sotto covert* (under the rose) a regular, downright harlot. So featly had she followed the trade by the space of five and fifty years, as maid, wife and widow, that scarce a suspicion had she roused against her at the age of seventy, when she died. She did get full value of her privileges as a woman; one time, when a young widow, she fell in love with a certain young nobleman, and not able otherwise to get him, she did come one Holy Innocents' day into his bed-chamber, to give him the usual greetings. But the young man gave her these readily enough, and with something else than the customary instrument. She had her dose,—and many another like it afterward.

Another widow I have known, which did keep her widowed estate for fifty years, all the while wantoning it right gallantly, but always with the most prudish modesty of mien, and many lovers at divers times. At the last, coming to die, one she had loved for twelve long years, and had had a son of him in secret, of this man she did make so small account she disowned him completely. Is not this a case where my word is illustrated, that we should never commend widows over much, unless we know thoroughly their life and life's end?

But at this rate I should never end; and an end we must have. I am well aware sundry will tell me I have left out many a witty word and merry tale which might have still better embellished and ennobled this my subject. I do well believe it; but an if I had gone on so from now to the end of the world, I should never have made an end; however if any be willing to take the trouble



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to do better, I shall be under great obligation to the same.

Well! dear ladies, I must e'en draw to an end; and I do beg you pardon me, an if I have said aught to offend you. 'Tis very far from my nature, whether inborn or gotten by education, to offend or displeasure you in any wise. In what I say of women, I do speak of some, not of all; and of these, I do use only false names and garbled descriptions. I do keep their identity so carefully hid, none may discover it, and never a breath of scandal can come on them but by mere conjecture and vague suspicion, never by certain inference.

I fear me 'tis only too likely I have here repeated a second time sundry witty sayings and diverting tales I have already told before in my other Discourses. Herein I pray such as shall be so obliging as to read all my works, to forgive me, seeing I make no pretence to being a great Writer or to possess the retentive memory needful to bear all in mind. The great Plutarch himself doth in his divers Works repeat several matters twice over. But truly, they that shall have the task of printing my books, will only need a good corrector to set all this matter right.





# NOTES









## NOTES

P. 3: At first this discourse was the last; it is outlined in the manuscript 608 as follows: "Discourse on why beautiful and faithful women love valiant men, and why worthy men love courageous women."

P. 4: Virgil, in his *Æneid* (Bk. I), makes Penthesileia appear only after Hector's death. For these accounts on the Amazons, consult *Traité historique sur les Amazones*, by Pierre Petit, Leyde, 1718.

P. 5: See Boccaccio, *De Claris Mulieribus*.

P. 6: *Æneid*, IV., 10-13.

P. 8: A Latin work of Boccaccio in nine books.

P. 8: Bk. IX., Chap. 3.

P. 9: *Nouvelle*, 1554-1574.

P. 9: Bandello, t. III., p. 1 (Venice, 1558).

P. 11: The Duc d'Anjou, afterwards Henri III. of France, is meant. He was the third son of Henri II. and Catherine de Medici, and was born at Fontainebleau 1551. On the death of his brother Charles IX. in 1574 he succeeded to the throne. Died 1589. The victories referred to are those of Jarnac and Montcontour.

P. 12: Ronsard, *Œuvres*, liv. 1, 174th sonnet.

P. 13: "Petit-Lit" is Leith,—the port of Edinburgh, on the Firth of Forth. The English army under Lord Grey of Wilton invaded Scotland in 1560, and laid siege to Leith, then occupied by the French. The place was stubbornly defended, but must soon have fallen, when envoys were sent by Francis II. from France to conclude a peace. These were Monluc, Bishop of Valence, and the

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Sieur de Randan mentioned in the text; the negotiators appointed to meet them on the English side were the Queen's great minister Cecil and Wotton, Dean of Canterbury. The French troops were withdrawn.

P. 13: The little Leith. (Cf. Jean de Beaugué, *Histoire de la guerre d'Ecosse*, reprinted by Montalembert in 1862, Bordeaux.)

P. 13: Jacques de Savoie, Duke de Nemours, died in 1585.

P. 13: Charles de La Rochefoucauld, Count de Randan, was sent to England in 1559, where he arranged peace with Scotland.

P. 14: An imaginary king without authority.

P. 14: Philibert le Voyer, lord of Lignerolles and of Bellefille, was frequently employed as a diplomatic agent. He was in Scotland in 1567. He was assassinated at Bourgueil in 1571, because he was suspected of betraying Charles IX.'s avowal regarding Saint Bartholomew.

P. 15: Brantôme knew quite well that the woman the handsome and alluring Duke de Nemours truly loved was no other than Mme. de Guise, Anne d'Este, whom he later married.

P. 15: XVIth Tale. Guillaume Gouffier, lord of Bonnivet.

P. 16: Marguerite de Valois took Bussy d'Amboise partly because of his reputation as a duellist.

P. 17: Jacques de Lorge, lord of Montgomerie, captain of Francis I.'s Scotch Guard and father of Henri II.'s involuntary murderer.

P. 18: Claude de Clermont, Viscount de Tallard.

P. 18: François de Hangest, lord of Genlis, captain of the Louvre, who died of hydrophobia at Strassburg in 1569.

P. 19: It is undoubtedly Louise de Halwin, surnamed Mlle. de Piennes the Elder, who later married Cipier of the Marcilly family.

P. 20: It is to this feminine stimulation that King Francis I. alluded in the famous quatrain in the Album of Aix, which is rightly or wrongly attributed to him.

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P. 20: Agnès Sorel, or Soreau, the famous mistress of Charles VII., was daughter of the Seigneur de St. Gérard, and was born at the village of Fromenteau in Touraine in 1409. From a very early age she was one of the maids of honour of Isabeau de Lorraine, Duchess of Anjou, and received every advantage of education. Her wit and accomplishments were no less admired than her beauty.

She first visited the Court of France in the train of this latter Princess in 1431, where she was known by the name of the *Demoiselle* de Fromenteau, and at once captivated the young King's heart. She appeared at Paris in the Queen's train in 1437, but was intensely unpopular with the citizens, who attributed the wasteful expenditure of the Court and the misfortunes of the Kingdom to her. Whatever may be the truth of Brantôme's tale of the astrologer, there is no doubt as to her having exerted her influence to rouse the King from the listless apathy he had fallen into, and the idle, luxurious life he was leading in his Castle of Chinon, while the English were still masters of half his dominions.

She was granted many titles and estates by her Royal lover,—amongst others the castle of Beauté, on the Marne, whence her title of La Dame de Beauté, and that of Loches, in the Abbey Church of which she was buried on her sudden death in 1450, and where her tomb existed down to 1792.

P. 20. Charles VII., son of the mad Charles VI., born 1403, crowned at Poitiers 1422, but only consecrated at Reims in 1429, after the capture of Orleans and the victories due to Jeanne d'Arc. The adversary of the Burgundians and the English under the Duke of Bedford and Henry V. of England. Died 1461.

P. 20: Henry V. of England, reigned, 1413-1422.

P. 20: Bertrand du Guesclin, Constable of France, the most famous warrior of the XIVth Century, and one of the greatest Captains of any age, was born about 1314 near Rennes of an ancient and distinguished family of Brittany. He was the great champion of France in the wars with the English, and the tales of his prowess are endless. Died 1380.

P. 21: Béatrix, fourth daughter of Raymond-Béranger IV., Count de Provence.

P. 22: Isabeau de Lorraine, daughter of Charles II., married René d'Anjou.

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P. 24: He called himself René de La Platière, lord of Les Bordes, and was ensign in Field Marshal de Bourdillon's company; he was killed at Dreux. He was the son of François de La Platière and Catherine Motier de La Fayette.

P. 24: Brantôme, in his eulogy of Bussy d'Amboise, relates that he reprimanded that young man for his mania of killing. The woman whom he compares here to Angélique was Marguerite de Valois.

P. 27: Brantôme is unquestionably referring again in this paragraph to Marguerite de Valois and Bussy d'Amboise.

P. 28: *Orlando furioso*, canto V.

P. 30: That is why Marguerite de Valois turned away "that big disgusting Viscount de Turenne." She compared him "to the empty clouds which look well only from without." (*Divorce satyrique*.)

P. 30: This is very likely an adventure that happened to Brantôme, and he had occasion to play the rôle of the "gentilhomme content."

P. 32: According to Lalanne, the two gentlemen are Le Balafre and Mayenne. If the "grande dame" was Marguerite, she bore Mayenne no grudge, whom she described as "a good companion, big and fat, and voluptuous like herself."

P. 37: It is Madeleine de Saint-Nectaire or Senneterre, married to the lord of Miramont, Guy de Saint-Exupéry; she supported the Huguenots. She defeated Montal in Auvergne, and according to Mézeray, killed him herself in 1574. (See Anselme, t. IV., p. 890.) In 1569, Mme. de Barbancon had also fought herself; she, too, was formerly an Italian, Ipolita Fioramonti.

P. 39: On the large square with the tower, in the centre of Sienna.

P. 40: Livy, Bk. XXVII., Chap. XXXVII.

P. 42: *Orlando furioso*, cantos XXII. and XXV.

P. 42: Christophe Jouvenel des Ursins, lord of La Chapelle, died in 1588.

P. 42: Henri II.



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P. 44: Ipolita Fioramonti, married to Luigi di Malaspina, of the Padua branch; she was general of the Duke of Milan's armies. (Litta, Malaspina di Pavia, t. VIII., tav. xx.)

P. 44: Famous fortified city and seaport on the Atlantic coast of France; 800 miles S. W. of Paris, capital of the modern Department of Charente-Inférieure.

P. 45: The interview between François de La Noue, surnamed Bras-de-Fer (iron arm), and the representatives of Monsieur, François, Duke d'Alençon, took place February 21, 1573. The scene that Brantôme describes happened Sunday, February 22.

P. 46: What Brantôme advances here is to be found in Jacques de Bourbon's *La grande et merveilleuse oppugnation de la noble cité de Rhodes*, 1527.

P. 46: The siege took place in 1536.

P. 47: August 14, 1536. Count de Nassau besieged Péronne at the head of 60,000 men; the population defended itself with the uttermost energy. Marie Fouré, according to some, was the principal heroine of this famous siege; according to others, all the honor should go to Mme. Catherine de Foix. (Cf. *Pièces et documents relatifs au siège de Péronne, en 1536*. Paris, 1864.)

P. 47: The siege of Sancerre began January 3, 1573; but the rôle of the women was more pacific than at Péronne; they nursed the wounded and fed the combatants. The energetic Joanneau governed the city. (Poupard, *Histoire de Sancerre*, 1777.)

P. 47: Vitré was besieged by the Duke de Mercœur in 1589. This passage of Brantôme's is quoted in the *Histoire de Vitré* by Louis Dubois (1839, pp. 87-88).

P. 47: Péronne, a small fortified town of N. W. France, on the Somme and in the Department of same name. It was bombarded by the Prussians in 1870, and the fine belfry of the XIVth Century destroyed. Its siege by the Comte de Nassau was in 1536.

P. 47: Sancerre, a small town on the left bank of the Loire, modern Department of the Cher, 27 miles from Bourges. The Huguenots of Sancerre endured two terrible sieges in 1569 and 1573.

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P. 47: Vitré, a town of Brittany, modern Department Ille-et-Vilaine, of about 10,000 inhabitants. Retains its medieval aspect and town walls to the present day.

P. 48: Collenuccio, Bk. V.

P. 49: Boccaccio has arranged this story in his *De claries mulieribus*, cap. CI. Vopiscus, *Aurelius*, XXVI-XXX, relates this fact more coolly.

P. 49: Zenobia, the famous Queen of Palmyra, widow of Odenathus, who had been allowed by the weak Emperor Gallienus to participate in the title of Augustus, and had extended his empire over a great part of Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt. She was eventually defeated by Aurelian in a great battle on the Orontes not far from Antioch. Palmyra was destroyed, and its inhabitants massacred; and Zenobia brought in chains to Rome.

P. 49: The Emperor Aurelian was born about 212 A. D., and was of very humble origin. He served as a soldier in almost every part of the Roman Empire, and rose at last to the purple by dint of his prowess and address in arms, succeeding Claudius in 270 A. D. Almost the whole of his short reign of four years and a half was occupied in constant fighting. Killed in a conspiracy 275 A. D.

P. 53: Perseus, the last King of Macedon, son of Philip V., came to the throne 179 B. C. His struggle with the Roman power lasted from 171 to 165, when he was finally defeated at the battle of Pydna by the consul L. Aemilius Paulus. He was carried to Rome and adorned the triumph of his conqueror in 167 B. C., and afterwards thrown into a dungeon. He was subsequently released, however, on the intercession of Aemilius Paulus, and died in honourable captivity at Alba.

P. 53: Maria of Austria, sister of Charles V., widow of Louis II. of Hungary, and ruler over the Netherlands; she died in 1558. It was against her rule that John of Leyden struggled.

P. 53: Brantôme has in mind Aurelia Victorina, mother of Victorinus, according to Trebillius Pollio, *Thirty Tyrants*, XXX.

P. 54: In Froissart, liv. I, chap. 174.

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P. 54: Henri I., Prince de Condé, died in 1588 (January 5), poisoned, says the *Journal de Henri*, by his wife Catherine Charlotte de la Trémolle.

P. 54: Isabella of Austria, daughter of Philip II.

P. 54: Jeanne de Flandres.

P. 55: Jacquette de Montberon, Brantôme's sister-in-law.

P. 55: Macchiavelli, Dell'arte della guerre, Bk. V., ii.

P. 56: Paule de Penthièvre, the second wife of Jean II. de Bourgogne, Count de Nevers.

P. 57: Richilde, Countess de Hainaut, who died in 1091.

P. 57: Hugues Spencer, or le Dépensier.

P. 57: Jean de Hainaut, brother of Count de Hainaut.

P. 57: Cassel and Broqueron.

P. 57: Edward II. of Caernarvon, King of England, was the fourth son of Edward I. and Queen Eleanor. Ascended the throne 1307, and married Isabel of France the following year. A cowardly and worthless Prince, and the tool of scandalous favourites, such as Piers Gaveston. Isabel and Mortimer landed at Orwell, in Suffolk, in 1326, and deposed the King, who was murdered at Berkeley Castle, 1307.

P. 58: Eleonore d'Acquitaine.

P. 59: Thevet wrote the *Cosmographie*; Nauclerus wrote a *Chronographie*.

P. 60: Vittoria Colonna, daughter of Fabrizio Colonna and of Agnes de Montefeltro, born in 1490, and affianced at the age of four to Ferdinand d'Avalos, who became her husband. The letter of which Brantôme speaks is famous; he found it in Vallès, fol. 205. As for Mouron, he was the great Chancellor Hieronimo Morone.

P. 61: Plutarch, *Anthony*, Chap. xiv.

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P. 62: Catherine Marie de Lorraine, wife of Louis de Bourbon, Duke De Montpensier.

P. 62: Henri III., assassinated at Paris, 1589.

P. 65: The *other man* was Mayenne.

P. 67: Poltrot de Méré was tortured and quartered (March 18, 1563). As regards the admiral, he was massacred August 24, 1572.

P. 68: Philibert de Marcilly, lord of Cipierre, tutor of Charles IX.

P. 71: On this adventure, consult the *Additions au Journal de Henri III.*, note 2.

P. 72: Louis de Correa, *Historia de la conquista del reino de Navarra*.

P. 76: Louise de Savoie.

P. 77: Charlotte de Roye, married to Francis III. de La Rochefoucauld in 1557; she died in 1559.

P. 78: Marguerite de Foix-Candale, married to Jean Louis de Nogaret, Duke d'Eperon.

P. 79: Renée de Bourdeille, daughter of André and Jacquette Montberon. She married, in 1579, David Bouchard, Viscount d'Aubeterre, who was killed in Périgord in 1593. She died in 1596. The daughter of whom Brantôme is about to speak was Hippolyte Bouchard, who was married to François d'Esparbez de Lussan. The three daughters whom he later mentions were: Jeanne, Countess de Duretal, Isabelle, Baroness d'Ambleville, and Adrienne, lady of Saint-Bonnet.

P. 80: Married subsequently to François d'Esparbez de Lusan, Maréchal d'Aubeterre.

P. 83: Renée de Clermont, daughter of Jacques de Clermont-d'Amboise, lord of Bussy; she was married to the incompetent Jean de Montluc-Balagny (bastard of the Bishop de Valence), created Field Marshal of France in 1594.



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P. 84: Gabrielle d'Estrées.

P. 85: Popular song of the day; Musée de Janequin. See *Recueil* of Pierre Atteignant.

P. 89: Renée Taveau, married to Baron Mortemart. François de Rochechouart.

P. 91: There is a copy of this sixth discourse in the MS. 4783, *du fonds français*, at the Bibliothèque Nationale: this copy is from the end of the sixteenth century.

P. 92: Charlotte de Savoie, second wife of Louis XI., daughter of Louis, Duke de Savoie.

P. 92: Louis XI. is generally supposed not only to have bandied many such stories with all the young bloods at the Court of Philippe le Bon, Duke of Burgundy, where he had taken refuge when Dauphin, but actually to have taken pains to have a collection of them made and afterwards published in the same order in which we have them, in the Work entitled "*Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*," lequel en soy contient cent chapitres ou histoires, composées ou récitées par nouvelles gens depuis naguères,—“An Hundred New Romances,—a Work containing in itself an hundred chapters or tales, composed or recited by divers folk in these last years.” This is confirmed by the words of the original preface or notice, which would appear to have been written in his life-time: “And observe that throughout the *Nouvelles*, wherever 'tis said by *Monseigneur*, Monseigneur the Dauphin is meant, which hath since succeeded to the crown and is now King Louis XI.; for in those days he was in the Duke of Burgundy's country.” But as it is absolutely certain this Prince only withdrew into Brabant at the end of the year 1456, and only returned to France in August 1461, it is quite impossible the Collection can have appeared in France about the year 1455, as is stated without sufficient consideration in the preface of the latest editions of this work. Two ancient editions are known, one,—Paris 1486, folio; the other also published at Paris, by the widow of Johan Trepperre, N. D., also folio. Besides this, two modern editions, with badly executed cuts, printed at Cologne, by Pierre Gaillard, 1701 and 1736 respectively, 2 vols. 8vo.

P. 93: By *Bourguignonne* the King meant *étrangère* (foreigner).

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P. 94: See the sojourn of Charles VIII. at Lyons: *Séjours de Charles VIII. et Louis XII. à Lyon sur le Rosne jouxte la copie des faicts, gestes et victoires des roys Charles VIII. et Louis XII.*, Lyon, 1841.

P. 94: Louis XII. had really been a "good fellow," without mentioning the laundress of the court, who was rumored to be the mother of Cardinal de Bucy, he had known at Genoa Thomasina Spinola, with whom, according to Jean d'Authon, his relations were purely moral.

P. 97: Francis I. forbade by the decree of December 23, 1523, that any farces be played at the colleges of the University of Paris "Wherein scandalous remarks are made about the King or the princes or about the people of the King's entourage." (Clairambault, 324, fol. 8747, at the Bibliothèque Nationale.) This king maintained, as Brantôme says, that women are very fickle and inconstant; he wrote to Montmorency of his own sister Marguerite de Valois, November 8, 1537: "We may be sure that when we wish women to stop they are dying to trot along; but when we wish them to go they refuse to budge from their place." (Clairambault, 336, fol. 6230, v°.)

P. 98: Paul Farnese, Paul III.—1468-1549.

P. 98: The queen arrived at Nice, June 8, 1538, where the king and Pope Paul III. were. The ladies of whom Brantôme speaks should be the Queen of Navarre, Mme. de Vendôme, the Duchess d'Etampes, the Marquess de Rothelin—that beautiful Rohan of whom it was said that her husband would get with child and not she—and thirty-eight gentlewomen. (Clair., 336, fol. 6549.)

P. 98: John Stuart, Duke of Albany, grandson of James II., King of Scotland. He was born in France in 1482 and died in 1536. The anecdote that Brantôme relates is connected with the journey of Clement VI. to Marseilles at the time of the marriage of Henri II., then Duke d'Orléans, with the niece of the pope, Catherine de Medici. The marriage took place at Marseilles in 1533.

P. 100: Louise de Clermont Tallard, who married as her second husband the Duc d'Uzes. Jean de Taix was the grand master of artillery.

P. 107: He was called Pierre de La Mare, lord of Matha, master

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of the horse to Marguerite, sister of the king. (Bib. Nat., Cabinet des Titres, art. Matha.) Aimée de Méré was at the court from 1560 to 1564. Hence this adventure took place during that time. (Bib. Nat. ms. français 7856, fol. 1136, v°.)

P. 108: Provided with "bards," plate-armour used to protect a horse's breast and flanks.

P. 109: This Fontaine-Guérin was in all likelihood Honorat de Bueil, lord of Fontaine-Guérin, gentleman of the king's bed-chamber, councillor of State, who died in 1590. He was a great favorite of Charles IX.

P. 112: The lady in question was Françoise de Rohan, dame de La Garnache, if we are to believe Bayle in the *Dict. Critique*, p. 1817, 2nd. ed., though there would seem to be some doubt about it. The "very brave and gallant Prince" was the Duc de Nemours.

P. 112: A German dance, the *Facheltanz*.

P. 113: Marie de Flamin.

P. 114: The son of this lady was Henri d'Angoulême, who killed Altoviti and was killed by him at Aix, and not at Marseilles, June 2, 1586. Philippe Altoviti was the Baron of Castellane; he had married the beautiful Renée de Rieux-Châteauneuf.

P. 115: *Le Tigre*—a pamphlet by François Hotman directed against the Cardinal de Lorraine and the Duchesse de Guise, 1560.

P. 116: Philibert de Marcilly, lord of Cipierre.

P. 117: That pamphlet was aimed at Anne d'Este, Duchess de Guise, at the time of her marriage with the Duc de Nemours.

P. 119: Brantôme alludes to the hatred of the Duchess de Montpensier.

P. 120: Marie de Clèves, who died during her lying-in in 1574.

P. 120: Catherine Charlotte de La Trémolle, Princess de Condé.

P. 122: Not found anywhere in Brantôme's extant works.

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P. 125: Du Guast or Lignerolles. However, it may refer to Bussy d'Amboise.

P. 126: Marie Babou de la Bourdaisière, who married Claude de Beauvillier Saint-Aignan in 1560.

P. 128: Plutarch, *Sylla*, cap. XXX.

P. 129: Queen Maria of Hungary, ruler of the Netherlands, and sister of Charles V.

P. 129: Plutarch, *Cato of Utica*, cap. XXXV.

P. 132: The personages in question are Henri III., Renée de Rieux-Châteauneuf, then Mme. de Castellane, and Marie de Clèves, wife of the Prince de Condé.

P. 132: Louis de Condé, who deserted Isabeau de La Tour de Limeuil to marry Françoise d'Orléans. The beauty of which Brantôme speaks can scarcely be seen in the portrait in crayon of Isabeau de Limeuil who became Mme. de Sardini.

P. 135: Mottoes were constantly used at that time.

P. 136: Anne de Bourbon, married in 1561 to François de Clèves, Duke de Nevers and Count d'Eu.

P. 146: The empress was Elizabeth of Portugal; the Marquis de Villena, M. de Villena; the Duke de Feria, Gomez Suarez de Figueroa, Duke de Feria; Eleonor, the Queen of Portugal, later married to François Ier; Queen Marie, the Queen of Hungary.

P. 147: Elizabeth, daughter of Henri II.

P. 151: The MS. of this discourse is at the Bibliothèque Nationale (Ms. fr. 3273); it is written in a good hand of the end of the sixteenth century. It is dedicated to the Duke d'Alençon.

P. 152: *Opere* di G. Boccaccio, *Il Filicopo*, Firenze, 1723, t. II., p. 73.

P. 159: *La Tournelle* in the original. This was the name given to the Criminal Court of the Parliament of Paris.



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P. 161: Barbe de Cilley; she died in 1415.

P. 166: Brantôme is undoubtedly referring to Mme. de Villequier.

P. 172: This is again Isabeau de La Tour Limeuil.

P. 178: See XXVth Tale in *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*.

P. 188: Honoré Castellan.

P. 188. Baron de Vitteau was this member of the Du Prat family; he killed Louis de Béranger du Guast.

P. 190: Chicot was Henri III.'s jester who killed M. de La Rochefoucauld on Saint Bartholomew's Day.

P. 194: *Alberic de Rosate*, under the word "Matrimonium" in his *Dictionary* reports an exactly similar instance. *Barbatias* has something even more extraordinary, how a boy of seven got his nurse with child.

P. 195: The Queen Mother Catherine de Medici. The author gives her name in his book of the *Dames Illustres*, where he tells the same story.

P. 207: Jean de Rabodanges, who married Marie de Clèves, mother of Louis XII. She was *reine blanche*, that is, she was in mourning; at that time the women of the nobility wore white when in mourning.

P. 207: These eighteen chevaliers, who were elevated in one batch, caused a good deal of gossip at the court.

P. 214: Louis de Béranger du Guast.

P. 216: She was thirty-five; she died three years later.

P. 217: It is the Château d'Usson in Auvergne.

P. 218: Louis de Saint-gelais-Lansac.

P. 220: Jeanne, married to Jean, Prince of Portugal. She died in 1578.

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P. 225: Sébastien, died in 1578. This passage in Brantôme is not one of the least irreverent of this hardened sceptic.

P. 226: The portraits of Marie disclose a protruding mouth. She is generally represented with a cap over her forehead. This feature is to be found in a marked degree in Queen Eleanore; and her brother Charles V. also had a protruding mouth. The drooping lip was likewise characteristic of all the later Dukes de Bourgogne.

P. 228: The entanglements of which Brantôme speaks were: the revolt of the Germanats, in Spain, in 1522; of Tunis or Barbarie, 1535; the troubles in Italy, also in 1535; the revolt in the Netherlands, provoked by the taxes imposed by Maria, in 1540. M. de Chièvres was Guillaume de Croy.

P. 229: Folembay, the royal residence occupied by François Ier and later by Henri II. Henri IV. negotiated there with Mayenne during the Ligue.

P. 229: Bains en Hainaut.

P. 230: Claude Blosset, surnamed Torcy, lady of Fontaine Chalandray.

P. 234: Christine of Denmark, daughter of Christian II., first married to Francesco Maria Sforza, Duke of Milan. In 1540, five years after her husband's death, she married Francis I. of Lorraine. Her son was Charles II. of Lorraine.

P. 235: N. de La Brosse-Mailly.

P. 235: A small plank attached to the saddle of a lady's horse, and serving to support the rider's feet. Superseded by the single stirrup and pommel.

P. 236: Guy du Faur de Pybrac.

P. 243: Renée, wife of Guillaume V., Duke de Bavière.

P. 246: Blanche de Montferrat, wife of Charles Ier, Duke de Savoie; she died in 1509.

P. 247: Paradin, *Chronique de Savoie*, III, 85.

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- P. 247: The seneschal's lady of Poitou was Mme. de Vivonne.
- P. 249: Nicolas de Lorraine-Vaudemont, father-in-law of Henri III.
- P. 249:—Françoise d'Orléans, widow of Louis, Prince de Condé.
- P. 250: Louise, daughter of Nicolas de Lorraine-Vaudemont, married in 1575; she died in 1601.
- P. 252: Jean de Talleyrand, former ambassador at Rome.
- P. 256: Marguerite de Lorraine, whose second marriage was with François de Luxembourg, Duke de Piney.
- P. 256: Mayenne, Duke du Maine.
- P. 256: Aymard de Chastes.
- P. 256: Refers of course to the assassination of Henri III., by the monk Clément (1589).
- P. 257: Catherine de Lorraine.
- P. 273: Jean Dorat, died in 1588. Louis de Béranger du Guast.
- P. 280: Cæsar Borgia, son of Pope Alexander VI.
- P. 280: Thomas de Foix, lord of Lescun, brother of Mme. de Châteaubriant.
- P. 280: Piero Strozzi, Field Marshal of France.
- P. 281: Jean de Bourdeille, brother of Brantôme. He died at the age of twenty-five at the siege of Hesdin. It was from him that the joint title of Brantôme passed on to our author.
- P. 281: Henri de Clermont, Viscount de Tallard.
- P. 281: André de Soleillas, Bishop of Riez in Provence, in 1576. He had a mistress who was given to playing the prude, but whose hypocrisy did not deceive King Henri IV. That Prince, one day,

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rebuking this lady for her love affairs, said her only delight was in *le jeune et l'oraison*,—fast and prayer.

P. 282: This widow of a Field Marshal of France was very likely the lady of Field Marshal de Saint-André. She wedded as a second husband Geoffroi de Caumont, abbé de Clairac. She called herself Marguerite de Lustrac. As for Brantôme's aunt, it should be Philippe de Beaupoil; she married La Chasteignerie, and as a second husband François de Caumont d'Aymé.

P. 285: Anne d'Anglure de Givry, son of Jeanne Chabot and René d'Anglure de Givry. Jeanne married as a second husband Field Marshal de La Chastre.

P. 285: Jean du Bellay and Blanche de Tournon.

P. 288: Odet de Coligny, Cardinal de Chastillon, married to Elizabeth de Hauteville.

P. 290: Henri II., who neglected his wife, the Queen, for the Duchesse de Valentinois (Diane de Poitiers), who was already quite an old woman and had been his father, the preceding King's, mistress.

P. 293: About the year 400 of the Christian era, St. Jerome witnessed the woman's funeral, and he it is reports the fact mentioned in the text. *Epist. ad Ageruchiam, De Monogamia*.

P. 293: Charles de Rochechouart.

P. 302: Scio was taken in 1566 by the Turks.

P. 309: It was to her that King Henri IV. said at a court ball by way of amusing the company, that she had used green wood and dry wood both. This jest he made at her expense, because the said lady did never spare any other woman's good name.

P. 310: *L'histoire et Plaisante cronique du Petit Jehan de Saintré*, par Antoine de La Salle. Paris, 1517.

P. 312: XLVth Tale.

P. 316: An allusion to the affair of Jarnac, who killed La Chasteignerie, Brantôme's uncle, in a duel (1547) with an unexpected and decisive thrust of the sword.



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P. 316: Alesandro de Medici, killed, in 1537, by his cousin Lorenzino.

P. 314: According to Rabelais, *poultre* (filly) is the name given to a mare that has never been leapt. So Bussy was not speaking with strict accuracy in using the term in this case.

P. 317: Mme. de Chateaubriant.

P. 318: Perhaps Marguerite de Valois and the ugly Martigues.

P. 321: The one-eyed Princess d'Eboli and the famous Antonio Perez.

P. 323: Jeanne de Poupincourt.

P. 324: Anne de Berri, Lady de Certeau, at the court in 1583. Hélène de Fonsèques.

P. 324: This princess was very ugly.

P. 330: In the sixteenth century it was customary to whip lazy people in bed. See Marot's epigram: Du Jour des Innocens.

END OF VOLUME TWO











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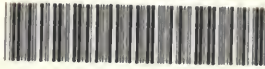
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